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THE NATIONAL BEING

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THE

NATIONAL BEING

SOME THOUGHTS ON AN IRISH POLITY

By A. E.

o.c. Gwendolen
Geo. William
"AE"

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK
1916

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SIR HORACE PLUNKETT

A good many years ago you grafted a slip of poetry on your economic tree. I do not know if you expected a hybrid. This essay may not be economics in your sense of the word. It certainly is not poetry in my sense. The Marriage of Heaven and Earth was foretold by the ancient prophets. I have seen no signs of that union taking place, but I have been led to speculate how they might be brought within hailing distance of each other. In my philosophy of life, we are all responsible for the results of our actions and their effects on others. This book is a consequence of your grafting operation, and so I dedicate it to you.

A. E.

THE NATIONAL BEING

I

In the year nineteen hundred and fourteen Anno Domini, amid a world conflict, the birth of the infant State of Ireland was announced. Almost unnoticed this birth, which in other times had been cried over the earth with rejoicings or anger. Mars, the red planet of war, was in the ascendant when it was born. Like other births famous in history, the child had to be hidden away for a time, and could not with pride be shown to the people as royal children were wont to be shown. Its enemies were unforgiving, and its friends were distracted with mighty happenings in the world. Hardly did they know whether it would not be deformed if it survived: whether this was the Promised, or another child yet to be conceived in the womb of the Mother of Parliaments. Battles were threatened between two hosts, secular champions of two spiritual traditions, to decide its fate. That such a conflict threatened showed indeed that there was something of iron fibre in

the infant, without which in their make-up individuals or nations do nothing worthy of remembrance. Hercules wrestled with twin serpents in his cradle, and there were twin serpents of sectarianism ready to strangle this infant State of ours if its guardians were not watchful, or if the infant was not itself strong enough to destroy them.

It is about the State of Ireland, its character and future, I have here written some kind of imaginative meditation. The State is a physical body prepared for the incarnation of the soul of a race. The body of the national soul may be spiritual or secular, aristocratic or democratic, civil or militarist predominantly. One or other will be most powerful, and the body of the race will by reflex action affect its soul, even as through heredity the inherited tendencies and passions of the flesh affect the indwelling spirit. Our brooding over the infant State must be dual, concerned not only with the body but the soul. When we essay self-government in Ireland our first ideas will, in all probability, be borrowed from the Mother of Parliaments, just as children before they grow to have a character of their own repeat the sentiments of their parents. After a time, if there is anything in the theory of Irish nationality, we will apply original principles as they are from time to time discovered to be fundamental in Irish character. A child in the same way makes discoveries about itself. The mood evoked by picture or poem reveals a love of beauty; the

harsh treatment of an animal provokes an outburst of pity; some curiosity of nature draws forth the spirit of scientific inquiry, and so, as the incidents of life reveal the innate affinities of a child to itself, do the adventures of a nation gradually reveal to it its own character and the will which is in it.

For all our passionate discussions over self-government we have had little speculation over our own character or the nature of the civilization we wished to create for ourselves. Nations rarely, if ever, start with a complete ideal. Certainly we have no national ideals, no principles of progress peculiar to ourselves in Ireland, which are a common possession of our people. National ideals are the possession of a few people only. Yet we must spread them in wide commonalty over Ireland if we are to create a civilization worthy of our hopes and our ages of struggle and sacrifice to attain the power to build. We must spread them in wide commonalty because it is certain that democracy will prevail in Ireland. The aristocratic classes with traditions of government, the manufacturing classes with economic experience, will alike be secondary in Ireland to the small farmers and the wage-earners in the towns. We must rely on the ideas common among our people, and on their power to discern among their countrymen the aristocracy of character and intellect.

Civilizations are externalizations of the soul and character of races. They are majestic or

mean according to the treasure of beauty, imagination, will, and thought laid up in the soul of the people. That great mid-European State, which while I write is at bay surrounded by enemies, did not arrive at that pitch of power which made it dominant in Europe simply by militarism. That military power depended on and was fed by a vigorous intellectual life, and the most generally diffused education and science existing perhaps in the world. The national being had been enriched by a long succession of mighty thinkers. A great subjective life and centuries of dream preceded a great objective manifestation of power and wealth. The stir in the German Empire which has agitated Europe was, at its root, the necessity laid on a powerful soul to surround itself with equal external circumstance. That necessity is laid on all nations, on all individuals, to make their external life correspond in some measure to their internal dream. A lover of beauty will never contentedly live in a house where all things are devoid of taste. An intellectual man will loathe a disordered society. We may say with certainty that the external circumstances of people are a measure of their inner life. Our mean and disordered little country towns in Ireland, with their drink-shops, their disregard of cleanliness or beauty, accord with the character of the civilians who inhabit them. Whenever we develop an intellectual life these things will be altered, but not in priority to the spiritual mood. House by house, village

by village, the character of a civilization changes as the character of the individuals change. When we begin to build up a lofty world within the national soul, soon the country becomes beautiful and worthy of respect in its externals. That building up of the inner world we have neglected. Our excited political controversies, our playing at militarism, have tended to bring men's thoughts from central depths to surfaces. Life is drawn to its frontiers away from its spiritual base, and behind the surfaces we have little to fall back on. Few of our notorieties could be trusted to think out any economic or social problem thoroughly and efficiently. They have been engaged in passionate attempts at the readjustment of the superficies of things. What we require more than men of action at present are scholars, economists, scientists, thinkers, educationalists, and littérateurs, who will populate the desert depths of national consciousness with real thought and turn the void into a fullness. We have few reserves of intellectual life to draw upon when we come to the mighty labour of nation-building. It will be indignantly denied, but I think it is true to say that the vast majority of people in Ireland do not know the difference between good and bad thinking, between the essential depths and the shallows in humanity. How could people, who never read anything but the newspapers, have any genuine knowledge of any subject on earth or much imagination of anything beautiful in the heavens?

What too many people in Ireland mistake for thoughts are feelings. It is enough to them to vent like or dislike, inherited prejudices or passions, and they think when they have expressed feeling they have given utterance to thought. The nature of our political controversies provoked passion, and passion has become dominant in our politics. Passion truly is a power in humanity, but it should never enter into national policy. It is a dangerous element in human life, though it is an essential part of our strangely compounded nature. But in national life it is the most dangerous of all guides. There are springs of power in ourselves which in passion we draw on and are amazed at their depth and intensity, yet we do not make these the master light of our being, but rather those divine laws which we have apprehended and brooded upon, and which shine with clear and steady light in our souls. As creatures rise in the scale of being the dominant factor in life changes. In vegetation it may be appetite; instinct in bird and beast; for man a life at once passionate and intellectual; but the greater beings, the stars and planets, must wheel in the heavens under the guidance of inexorable and inflexible law. Now the State is higher in the scale of being than the individual, and it should be dominated solely by moral and intellectual principles. These are not the outcome of passion or prejudice, but of arduous thought. National ideals must be built up with the same conscious deliberation of purpose as the architect of the

Parthenon conceived its lofty harmony of shining marble lines, or as the architect of Rheims Cathedral designed its intricate magnificence and mystery. Nations which form their ideals and marry them in the hurry of passion are likely to repent without leisure, and they will not be able to divorce those ideals without prolonged domestic squabbles and public cleansing of dirty linen. If we are to build a body for the soul of Ireland it ought not to be a matter of reckless estimates or jerry-building. We have been told, during my lifetime at least, not to criticize leaders, to trust leaders, and so intellectual discussion ceased and the high principles on which national action should be based became less and less understood, less and less common possessions. The nation was not conceived of as a democracy freely discussing its laws, but as a secret society with political chiefs meeting in the dark and issuing orders. No doubt our political chieftains loved their country, but love has many degrees of expression from the basest to the highest. The basest love will wreck everything, even the life of the beloved, to gratify ignoble desires. The highest love conspires with the imaginative reason to bring about every beautiful circumstance around the beloved which will permit of the highest development of its life. There is no real love apart from this intellectual brooding. Men who love Ireland ignobly brawl about her in their cups, quarrel about her with their neighbour, allow no freedom of thought of her or service of her other than their

own, take to the cudgel and the rifle, and join sectarian orders or lodges to ensure that Ireland will be made in their own ignoble image. Those who love Ireland nobly desire for her the highest of human destinies. They would ransack the ages and accumulate wisdom to make Irish life seem as noble in men's eyes as any the world has known. The better minds in every race, eliminating passion and prejudice, by the exercise of the imaginative reason have revealed to their countrymen ideals which they recognized were implicit in national character. It is such discoveries we have yet to make about ourselves to unite us to fulfil our destiny. We have to discover what is fundamental in Irish character, the affections, leanings, tendencies towards one or more of the eternal principles which have governed and inspired all great human effort, all great civilizations from the dawn of history. A nation is but a host of men united by some God-begotten mood, some hope of liberty or dream of power or beauty or justice or brotherhood, and until that master idea is manifested to us there is no shining star to guide the ship of our destinies.

Our civilization must depend on the quality of thought engendered in the national being. We have to do for Ireland—though we hope with less arrogance—what the long and illustrious line of German thinkers, scientists, poets, philosophers, and historians did for Germany, or what the poets and artists of Greece did for the

Athenians: and that is, to create national ideals which will dominate the policy of statesmen, the actions of citizens, the universities, the social organizations, the administration of State departments, and unite in one spirit urban and rural life. Unless this is done Ireland will be like Portugal, or any of the corrupt little penny-dreadful nationalities which so continually disturb the peace of the world with internal revolutions and external brawlings, and we shall only have achieved the mechanism of nationality, but the spirit will have eluded us.

What I have written hereafter on the national being, my thoughts on an Irish polity, are not to be taken as an attempt to deal with more than a few essentials. I offer it to my countrymen, to start thought and discussion upon the principles which should prevail in an Irish civilization. If to readers in other countries the thought appears primitive or elementary, I would like them to remember that we are at the beginning of our activity as a nation, and we have yet to settle fundamentals. Races hoary with political wisdom may look with disdain on the attempts at political thinking by a new self-governing nationality, or the theories of civilization discussed about the cradle of an infant State. To childhood may be forgiven the elemental character of its thought and its idealistic imaginations. They may not persist in developed manhood; but if youth has never drawn heaven and earth together in its imaginations, manhood will ever be undistin-

guished. This book only begins a meditation in which, I hope, nobler imaginations and finer intellects than mine will join hereafter, and help to raise the soul of Ireland nigher to the ideal and its body nigher to its soul.

II

THE building up of a civilization is at once the noblest and the most practical of all enterprises, in which human faculties are exalted to their highest, and beauties and majesties are manifested in multitude as they are never by solitary man or by disunited peoples. In the highest civilizations the individual citizen is raised above himself and made part of a greater life, which we may call the National Being. He enters into it, and it becomes an oversoul to him, and gives to all his works a character and grandeur and a relation to the works of his fellow-citizens, so that all he does conspires with the labours of others for unity and magnificence of effect. So ancient Egypt, with its temples, sphinxes, pyramids, and symbolic decorations, seems to us as if it had been created by one grandiose imagination; for even the lesser craftsmen, working on the mummy case for the tomb, had much of the mystery and solemnity in their work which is manifest in temple and pyramid. So the city States in ancient Greece in their day were united by ideals to a harmony of art and architecture and literature. Among the Athenians at their highest the ideal of the State

so wrought upon the individual that its service became the overmastering passion of life, and in that great oration of Pericles, where he told how the Athenian ideal inspired the citizens so that they gave their bodies for the commonwealth, it seems to have been conceived of as a kind of oversoul, a being made up of immortal deeds and heroic spirits, influencing the living, a life within their life, moulding their spirits to its likeness. It appears almost as if in some of these ancient famous communities the national ideal became a kind of tribal deity, that began first with some great hero who died and was immortalized by the poets, and whose character, continually glorified by them, grew at last so great in song that he could not be regarded as less than a demi-god. We can see in ancient Ireland that Cuchulain, the dark sad man of the earlier tales, was rapidly becoming a divinity, a being who summed up in himself all that the bards thought noblest in the spirit of their race; and if Ireland had a happier history no doubt one generation of bardic chroniclers after another would have moulded that half-mythical figure into the Irish ideal of all that was chivalrous, tender, heroic, and magnanimous, and it would have been a star to youth, and the thought of it a staff to the very noblest. Even as Cuchulain alone at the ford held it against a host, so the ideal would have upheld the national soul in its darkest hours, and stood in many a lonely place in the heart. The national soul in a theocratic State is a god; in an

aristocratic age it assumes the character of a hero; and in a democracy it becomes a multitudinous being, definite in character if the democracy is a real social organism. But where the democracy is only loosely held together by the social order, the national being is vague in character, is a mood too feeble to inspire large masses of men to high policies in times of peace, and in times of war it communicates frenzy, panic, and delirium.

None of our modern States create in us such an impression of being spiritually oversouled by an ideal as the great States of the ancient world. The leaders of nations too have lost that divine air that many leaders of men wore in the past, and which made the populace rumour them as divine incarnations. It is difficult to know to what to attribute this degeneration. Perhaps the artists who create ideals are to blame. In ancient Ireland, in Greece, and in India, the poets wrote about great kings and heroes, enlarging on their fortitude of spirit, their chivalry and generosity, creating in the popular mind an ideal of what a great man was like; and men were influenced by the ideal created, and strove to win the praise of the bards and to be recrowned by them a second time in great poetry. So we had Cuchulain and Oscar in Ireland; Hector of Troy, Theseus in Greece; Yudisthira, Rama, and Arjuna in India, all bard-created heroes moulding the minds of men to their image. It is the great defect of our modern literature that it creates few such types. How hardly could

one of our modern public men be made the hero of an epic. It would be difficult to find one who could be the subject of a genuine lyric. Whitman, himself the most democratic poet of the modern world, felt this deficiency in the literature of the later democracies, and lamented the absence of great heroic figures. The poets have dropped out of the divine procession, and sing a solitary song. They inspire nobody to be great, and failing any finger-post in literature pointing to true greatness our democracies too often take the huckster from his stall, the drunkard from his pot, the lawyer from his court, and the company promoter from the director's chair, and elect them as representative men. We certainly do this in Ireland. It is—how many hundred years since greatness guided us? In Ireland our history begins with the most ancient of any in a mythical era when earth mingled with heaven. The gods departed, the half-gods also, hero and saint after that, and we have dwindled down to a petty peasant nationality, rural and urban life alike mean in their externals. Yet the cavalcade, for all its tattered habiliments, has not lost spiritual dignity. There is still some incorruptible spiritual atom in our people. We are still in some relation to the divine order; and while that incorrupted spiritual atom still remains all things are possible if by some inspiration there could be revealed to us a way back or forward to greatness, an Irish polity in accord with national character.

III

In formulating an Irish polity we have to take into account the change in world conditions. A theocratic State we shall have no more. Every nation, and our own along with them, is now made up of varied sects, and the practical dominance of one religious idea would let loose illimitable passions, the most intense the human spirit can feel. The way out of the theocratic State was by the drawn sword and was lit by the martyr's fires. The way back is unthinkable for all Protestant fears or Catholic aspirations. Aristocracies, too, become impossible as rulers. The aristocracy of character and intellect we may hope shall finally lead us, but no aristocracy so by birth will renew its authority over us. The character of great historic personages is gradually reflected in the mass. The divine right of kings is followed by the idea of the divine right of the people, and democracies finally become ungovernable save by themselves. They have seen and heard too much of pride and greatness not to have become, in some measure, proud and defiant of all authority except their own. It

may be said the history of democracies is not one to fill us with confidence, but the truth is the world has yet to see the democratic State, and of the yet untried we may think with hope. Beneath the Athenian and other ancient democratic States lay a substratum of humanity in slavery, and the culture, beauty, and bravery of these extraordinary peoples were made possible by the workers in an underworld who had no part in the bright civic life.

We have no more a real democracy in the world to-day. Democracy in politics has in no country led to democracy in its economic life. We still have autocracy in industry as firmly seated on its throne as theocratic king ruling in the name of a god, or aristocracy ruling by military power; and the forces represented by these twain, superseded by the autocrats of industry, have become the allies of the power which took their place of pride. Religion and rank, whether content or not with the subsidiary place they now occupy, are most often courtiers of Mammon and support him on his throne. For all the talk about democracy our social order is truly little more democratic than Rome was under the Caesars, and our new rulers have not, with all their wealth, created a beauty which we could imagine after-generations brooding over with uplifted heart.

The people in theocratic States like Egypt or Chaldea, ruled in the name of gods, saw rising out of the plains in which they lived an archi-

tecture so mysterious and awe-inspiring that they might well believe the master-minds who designed the temples were inspired from the Oversoul. The aristocratic States reflected the love of beauty which is associated with aristocracies. The oligarchies of wealth in our time, who have no divine sanction to give dignity to their rule nor traditions of lordly life like the aristocracies, have not in our day created beauty in the world. But whatever of worth the ancient systems produced was not good enough to make permanent their social order. Their civilizations, like ours, were built on the unstable basis of a vast working-class with no real share in the wealth and grandeur it helped to create. The character of his kingdom was revealed in dream to Nebuchadnezzar by an image with a golden head and feet of clay, and that image might stand as symbol of the empires the world has known. There is in all a vast population living in an underworld of labour whose freedom to vote confers on them no real power, and who are most often scorned and neglected by those who profit by their labours. Indifference turns to fear and hatred if labour organizes and gathers power, or makes one motion of its myriad hands towards the sceptre held by the autocrats of industry. When this class is maddened and revolts, civilization shakes and totters like cities when the earthquake stirs beneath their foundations. Can we master these arcane human forces? Can we, by any device, draw this

submerged humanity into the light and make them real partners in the social order, not partners merely in the political life of the nation, but, what is of more importance, in its economic life? If we build our civilization without integrating labour into its economic structure, it will wreck that civilization, and it will do that more swiftly to-day than two thousand years ago, because there is no longer the disparity of culture between high and low which existed in past centuries. The son of the artisan, if he cares to read, may become almost as fully master of the wisdom of Plato or Aristotle as if he had been at a university. Emerson will speak to him of his divinity; Whitman, drunken with the sun, will chant to him of his inheritance of the earth. He is elevated by the poets and instructed by the economists. But there are not thrones enough for all who are made wise in our social order, and failing even to serve in the social heaven these men will spread revolt and reign in the social hell. They are becoming too many for higher places to be found for them in the national economy. They are increasing to a multitude which must be considered, and the framers of a national polity must devise a life for them where their new-found dignity of spirit will not be abased. Men no more will be content under rulers of industry they do not elect themselves than they were under political rulers claiming their obedience in the name of God. They will not for long labour in industries

where they have no power to fix the conditions of their employment, as they were not content with a political system which allowed them no power to control legislation. Ireland must begin its imaginative reconstruction of a civilization by first considering that type which, in the earlier civilizations of the world, has been slave, serf, or servile, working either on land or at industry, and must construct with reference to it. These workers must be the central figures, and how their material, intellectual, and spiritual needs are met must be the test of value of the social order we evolve.

IV

In Ireland we begin naturally our consideration of this problem with the folk of the country, pondering all the time upon our ideal—the linking up of individuals with each other and with the nation. Since the destruction of the ancient clans in Ireland almost every economic factor in rural life has tended to separate the farmers from each other and from the nation, and to bring about an isolation of action; and that was so until the movement for the organization of agriculture was initiated by Sir Horace Plunkett and his colleagues in that patriotic association, the Irish Agricultural Organization Society. Though its actual achievement is great; though it may be said to be the pivot round which Ireland has begun to swing back to its traditional and natural communism in work, we still have over the larger part of Ireland conditions prevailing which tend to isolate the individual from the community.

When we examine rural Ireland, outside this new movement, we find everywhere isolated and individualistic agricultural production, served

with regard to purchase and sale by private traders and dealers, who are independent of economic control from the consumers or producers, or the State. The tendency in the modern world to conduct industry in the grand manner is not observable here. The first thing which strikes one who travels through rural Ireland is the immense number of little shops. They are scattered along the highways and at the cross-roads; and where there are a few families together in what is called a village, the number of little shops crowded round these consumers is almost incredible. What are all these little shops doing? They are supplying the farmers with domestic requirements: with tea, sugar, flour, oil, implements, vessels, clothing, and generally with drink. Every one of them almost is a little universal provider. Every one of them has its own business organization, its relations with wholesale houses in the greater towns. All of them procure separately from others their bags of flour, their barrels of porter, their stocks of tea, sugar, raisins, pots, pans, nails, twine, fertilizers, and what not, and all these things come to them paying high rates to the carriers for little loads. The trader's cart meets them at the station, and at great expense the necessaries of life are brought together. In the world-wide amalgamation of shoe-makers into boot factories, and smithies into ironworks, which is going on in Europe and America, these little shops have been overlooked.

Nobody has tried to amalgamate them, or to economize human effort or cheapen the distribution of the necessaries of life. This work of distribution is carried on by all kinds of little traders competing with each other, pulling the devil by the tail; doing the work economically, so far as they themselves are concerned, because they must, but doing it expensively for the district because they cannot help it. They do not serve Ireland well. The genius of amalgamation and organization cannot afford to pass by these shops, which spring up in haphazard fashion, not because the country needs them, but because farmers or traders have children to be provided for. To the ignorant this is the easiest form of trade, and so many are started in life in one of these little shops after an apprenticeship in another like it. These numerous competitors of each other do not keep down prices. They increase them rather by the unavoidable multiplication of expenses; and many of them, taking advantage of the countryman's irregularity of income and his need for credit, allow credit to a point where the small farmer becomes a tied customer, who cannot pay all he owes, and who therefore dares not deal elsewhere. These agencies for distribution do not by their nature enlarge the farmer's economic knowledge. His vision beyond them to their sources of supply is blocked, and in this respect he is debarred from any unity with national producers other than his own class.

Let us now for a little consider the small farmer around whom have gathered these multitudinous little agencies of distribution. What kind of a being is he? We must deal with averages, and the small farmer is the typical Irish countryman. The average area of an Irish farm is twenty-five acres or thereabouts. There are hundreds of thousands who have more or less. But we can imagine to ourselves an Irish farmer with twenty-five acres to till, lord of a herd of four or five cows, a drift of sheep, a litter of pigs, perhaps a mare and foal: call him Patrick Maloney and accept him as symbol of his class. We will view him outside the operation of the new co-operative policy, trying to obey the command to be fruitful and replenish the earth. He is fruitful enough. There is no race suicide in Ireland. His agriculture is largely traditional. It varied little in the nineteenth century from the eighteenth, and the beginnings of the twentieth century show little change in spite of a huge department of agriculture. His butter, his eggs, his cattle, horses, pigs, and sheep are sold to local dealers. He rarely knows where his produce goes to—whether it is devoured in the next county or is sent across the Channel. It might be pitched into the void for all he knows about its destiny. He might be described almost as the primitive economic cave-man, the darkness of his cave unillumined by any ray of general principles. As he is obstructed by the traders in a general vision of production other than his

own, so he is obstructed by these dealers in a general vision of the final markets for his produce. His reading is limited to the local papers, and these, following the example of the modern press, carefully eliminate serious thought as likely to deprive them of readers. But Patrick, for all his economic backwardness, has a soul. The culture of the Gaelic poets and story-tellers, while not often actually remembered, still lingers like a fragrance about his mind. He lives and moves and has his being in the loveliest nature, the skies over him ever cloudy like an opal; and the mountains flow across his horizon in wave on wave of amethyst and pearl. He has the unconscious depth of character of all who live and labour much in the open air, in constant fellowship with the great companions—with the earth and the sky and the fire in the sky. We ponder over Patrick, his race and his country, brooding whether there is the seed of a Pericles in Patrick's loins. Could we carve an Attica out of Ireland?

Before Patrick can become the father of a Pericles, before Ireland can become an Attica, Patrick must be led out of his economic cave: his low cunning in barter must be expanded into a knowledge of economic law; his fanatical concentration on his family—begotten by the isolation and individualism of his life—be sublimed into national affections; his unconscious depths be sounded, his feeling for beauty be awakened by contact with some of the great literature of the world. His mind is virgin soil, and we may

hope that, like all virgin soil, it will be immensely fruitful when it is cultivated. How does the policy of co-working make Patrick pass away from his old self? We can imagine him as a member of a committee getting hints of a strange doctrine called science from his creamery manager. He hears about bacteria, and these dark invisibles replace, as the cause of bad butter-making, the wicked fairies of his childhood. Watching this manager of his society he learns a new respect for the man of special or expert knowledge. Discussing the business of his association with other members he becomes something of a practical economist. He knows now where his produce goes. He learns that he has to compete with Americans, Europeans, and Colonials—indeed with the farmers of the world, hitherto concealed from his view by a mountainous mass of middlemen. He begins to be interested in these countries and reads about them. He becomes a citizen of the world. His horizon is no longer bounded by the wave of blue hills beyond his village. The roar of the planet begins to sound in his ears. What is more important is that he is becoming a better citizen of his own country. He meets on his committee his religious and political opponents, not now discussing differences but identities of interest. He also meets the delegates from other societies in district conferences or general congresses, and those who meet thus find their interests are common, and a new friendliness springs up between North and South,

and local co-operation leads on to national co-operation. The best intellects, the best business men in the societies, meet in the big centres as directors of federations and wholesales, and they get an all-Ireland view of their industry. They see the parish from the point of view of the nation, and this vision does not desert them when they go back to the parish. They realize that their interests are bound up with national interests, and they discuss legislation and administration with practical knowledge. Eyes getting keener every year, minds getting more instructed, begin to concentrate on Irish public men. Presently Patrick will begin to seek for men of special knowledge and administrative ability to manage Irish affairs. Ireland has hitherto been to Patrick a legend, a being mentioned in romantic poetry, a little dark Rose, a mystic maiden, a vague but very simple creature of tears and aspirations and revolts. He now knows what a multitudinous being a nation is, and in contact with its complexities Patrick's politics take on a new gravity, thoughtfulness, and intellectual character.

Under the influence of these associations and the ideas pervading them our typical Irish farmer gets drawn out of his agricultural sleep of the ages, developing rapidly as mummy-wheat brought out of the tomb and exposed to the eternal forces which stimulate and bring to life. I have taken an individual as a type, and described the original circumstance and illustrated the playing of the

new forces on his mind. It is the only way we can create a social order which will fit our character as the glove fits the hand. Reasoning solely from abstract principles about justice, democracy, the rights of man and the like, often leads us into futilities, if not into dangerous political experiments. We have to see our typical citizen in clear light, realize his deficiencies, ignorance, and incapacity, and his possibilities of development, before we can wisely enlarge his boundaries. The centre of the citizen is the home. His circumference ought to be the nation. The vast majority of Irish citizens rarely depart from their centre, or establish those vital relations with their circumference which alone entitle them to the privileges of citizenship, and enable them to act with political wisdom. An emotional relationship is not enough. Our poets sang of a united Ireland, but the unity they sang of was only a metaphor. It mainly meant separation from another country. In that imaginary unity men were really separate from each other. Individualism, fanatically centring itself on its family and family interests, interfered on public boards to do jobs in the interests of its kith and kin. The co-operative movement connects with living links the home, the centre of Patrick's being, to the nation, the circumference of his being. It connects him with the nation through membership of a national movement, not for the political purposes which call on him for a vote once every few years, but for economic purposes which affect him in the

course of his daily occupations. This organization of the most numerous section of the Irish democracy into co-operative associations, as it develops and embraces the majority, will tend to make the nation one and indivisible and conscious of its unity. The individual, however meagre his natural endowment of altruism, will be led to think of his community as himself; because his income, his social pleasures even, depend on the success of the local and national organizations with which he is connected. The small farmers of former times pursued a petty business of barter and haggle, fighting for their own hand against half the world about them. The farmers of the new generation will grow up in a social order, where all the transactions which narrowed their fathers' hearts will be communal and national enterprises. How much that will mean in a change of national character we can hardly realize, we who were born in an Ireland where petty individualism was rampant, and where every child had it borne in upon him that it had to fight its own corner in the world, where the whole atmosphere about it tended to the hardening of the personality.

We may hope and believe that this transformation of the social order will make men truly citizens, thinking in terms of the nation, identifying national with personal interests. For those who believe there is a divine seed in humanity, this atmosphere, if any, they may hope will promote the swift blossoming of the divine seed which

in the past, in favourable airs, has made beauty or grandeur or spirituality the characteristics of ancient civilizations in Greece, in Egypt, and in India. No one can work for his race without the hope that the highest, or more than the highest, humanity has reached will be within reach of his race also. We are all laying foundations in dark places, putting the rough-hewn stones together in our civilizations, hoping for the lofty edifice which will arise later and make all the work glorious. And in Ireland, for all its melancholy history, we may, knowing that we are human, dream that there is the seed of a Pericles in Patrick's loins, and that we might carve an Attica out of Ireland.

V

In Ireland we must of necessity give special thought to the needs of the countryman, because our main industry is agriculture. We have few big cities. Our great cities are almost all outside our own borders. They are across the Atlantic. The surplus population of the countryside do not go to our own towns but emigrate. The exodus does not enrich Limerick or Galway, but New York. The absorption of life in great cities is really the danger which most threatens the modern State with a decadence of its humanity. In the United States, even in Canada, hardly has the pioneer made a home in the wilderness when his sons and his daughters are allured by the distant gleam of cities beyond the plains. In England the countryside has almost ceased to be the mother of men—at least a fruitful mother. We are face to face in Ireland with this problem, with no crowded and towering cities to disguise the emptiness of the fields. It is not a problem which lends itself to legislative solution. Whether there be fair rents or no rents at all, the child of the peasant, yearning for a fuller life, goes where

life is at its fullest. We all desire life, and that we might have it more abundantly,—the peasant as much as the mystic thirsting for infinite being, —and in rural Ireland the needs of life have been neglected.

The chief problem of Ireland—the problem which every nation in greater or lesser measure will have to solve—is how to enable the countryman, without journeying, to satisfy to the full his economic, social, intellectual, and spiritual needs. We have made some tentative efforts. The long war over the land, which resulted in the transference of the land from landlord to cultivator, has advanced us part of the way, but the Land Acts offered no complete solution. We were assured by hot enthusiasts of the magic of proprietorship, but Ireland has not tilled a single acre more since the Land Acts were passed. Our rural exodus continued without any Moses to lead us to Jerusalems of our own. At every station boys and girls bade farewell to their friends; and hardly had the train steamed out when the natural exultation of adventure made the faces of the emigrants glow because the world lay before them, and human appetites the country could not satisfy were to be appeased at the end of the journey.

How can we make the countryside in Ireland a place which nobody would willingly emigrate from? When we begin to discuss this problem we soon make the discovery that neither in the new world nor the old has there been much first-

class thinking on the life of the countryman. This will be apparent if we compare the quality of thought which has been devoted to the problems of the city State, or the constitution of widespread dominions, from the days of Solon and Aristotle down to the time of Alexander Hamilton, and compare it with the quality of thought which has been brought to bear on the problems of the rural community.

On the labours of the countryman depend the whole strength and health, nay, the very existence of society, yet, in almost every country, politics, economics, and social reform are urban products, and the countryman gets only the crumbs which fall from the political table. It seems to be so in Canada and the States even, countries which we in Europe for long regarded as mainly agricultural. It seems only yesterday to the imagination that they were colonized, and yet we find the Minister of Agriculture in Canada announcing a decline in the rural population in Eastern Canada. As children sprung from the loins of diseased parents manifest at an early age the same defects in their constitution, so Canada and the States, though in their national childhood, seem already threatened by the same disease from which classic Italy perished, and whose ravages to-day make Great Britain seem to the acute diagnoser of political health to be like a fruit—ruddy without, but eaten away within and rotten at the core. One expects disease in old age, but not in youth. We expect young countries to

sow their wild oats, to have a few revolutions before they settle down to national housekeeping; but we are not moved by these troubles—the result of excessive energy—as we are by symptoms of premature decay. No nation can be regarded as unhealthy when a virile peasantry, contented with rural employments, however discontented with other things, exists on its soil. The disease which has attacked our great populations here and in America is a discontent with rural life. Nothing which has been done hitherto seems able to promote content. It is true, indeed, that science has gone out into the fields, but the labours of the chemist, the bacteriologist, and the mechanical engineer are not enough to ensure health. What is required is the art of the political thinker, the imagination which creates a social order and adjusts it to human needs. The physician who understands the general laws of human health is of more importance to us here than the specialist. The genius of rural life has not yet appeared. We have no fundamental philosophy concerning it, but we have treasures of political wisdom dealing with humanity as a social organism in the city States or as great nationalities. It might be worth while inquiring to what extent the wisdom of a Solon, an Aristotle, a Rousseau, or an Alexander Hamilton might be applied to the problem of the rural community. After all, men are not so completely changed in character by their rural environment that their social needs do not, to a large extent, coincide with the needs

of the townsman. They cannot be considered as creatures of a different species. Yet statesmen who have devoted so much thought to the constitution of empires and the organization of great cities, who have studied their psychology, have almost always treated the rural problem purely as an economic problem, as if agriculture was a business only and not a life.

Our great nations and widespread empires arose in a haphazard fashion out of city States and scattered tribal communities. The fusion of these into larger entities, which could act jointly for offence or defence, so much occupied the thoughts of their rulers that everything else was subordinated to it. As a result, the details of our modern civilizations are all wrong. There is an intensive life at a few great political or industrial centres, and wide areas where there is stagnation and decay. Stagnation is most obvious in rural districts. It is so general that it has been often assumed that there was something inherent in rural life which made the countryman slow in mind as his own cattle. But this is not so, as I think can be shown. There is no reason why as intense, intellectual, and progressive a life should not be possible in the country as in the towns. The real reason for the stagnation is that the country population is not organized. We often hear the expression, "the rural community," but where do we find rural communities? There are rural populations, but that is altogether a different thing. The word "community"

implies an association of people having common interests and common possessions, bound together by laws and regulations which express these common interests and ideals, and define the relation of the individual to the community. Our rural populations are no more closely connected, for the most part, than the shifting sands on the seashore. Their life is almost entirely individualistic. There are personal friendships, of course, but few economic or social partnerships. Everybody pursues his own occupation without regard to the occupation of his neighbours. If a man emigrates it does not affect the occupation of those who farm the land all about him. They go on ploughing and digging, buying and selling, just as before. They suffer no perceptible economic loss by the departure of half-a-dozen men from the district. A true community would, of course, be affected by the loss of its members. A co-operative society, if it loses a dozen members, the milk of their cows, their orders for fertilizers, seeds, and feeding-stuffs, receives serious injury to its prosperity. There is a minimum of trade below which its business cannot fall without bringing about a complete stoppage of its work and an inability to pay its employees. That is the difference between a community and an unorganized population. In the first the interests of the community make a conscious and direct appeal to the individual, and the community, in its turn, rapidly develops an interest in the welfare of the member. In the second, the

interest of the individual in the community is only sentimental, and as there is no organization, the community lets its units slip away or disappear without comment or action. We had true rural communities in ancient Ireland, though the organization was rather military than economic. But the members of a clan had common interests. They owned the land in common. It was a common interest to preserve it intact. It was to their interest to have a numerous membership of the clan, because it made it less liable to attack. Men were drawn by the social order out of merely personal interests into a larger life. In their organizations they were unconsciously groping, as all human organizations are, towards the final solidarity of humanity—the federation of the world.

Well, these old rural communities disappeared. The greater organizations of nation or empire regarded the smaller communities jealously in the past, and broke them up and gathered all the strings of power into capital cities. The result was a growth of the State, with a local decay of civic, patriotic, or public feeling, ending in bureaucracies and State departments, where paid officials, devoid of intimacy with local needs, replaced the services naturally and voluntarily rendered in an earlier period. The rural population, no longer existing as a rural community, sank into stagnation. There was no longer a common interest, a social order turning their minds to larger than individual ends. Where

feudalism was preserved, the feudal chief, if the feeling of *noblesse oblige* was strong, might act as a centre of progress, but where this was lacking social decay set in. The difficulty of moving the countryman, which has become traditional, is not due to the fact that he lives in the country, but to the fact that he lives in an unorganized society. If in a city people want an art gallery or public baths or recreation grounds, there is a machinery which can be set in motion; there are corporations and urban councils which can be approached. If public opinion is evident—and it is easy to organize public opinion in a town—the city representatives will consider the scheme, and if they approve and it is within their power as a council, they are able to levy rates to finance the art gallery, recreation grounds, public gardens, or whatever else. Now let us go to a country district where there is no organization. It may be obvious to one or two people that the place is perishing and the intelligence of its humanity is decaying, lacking some centre of life. They want a village hall, but how is it to be obtained? They begin talking about it to this person or that. They ask these people to talk to their friends, and the ripples go out weakening and widening for months, perhaps for years. I know of districts where this has happened. There are hundreds of parishes in Ireland where one or two men want co-operative societies or village halls or rural libraries. They discuss the matter with their neighbours, but

find a complete ignorance on the subject, and consequent lethargy. There is no social organism with a central life to stir. Before enthusiasm can be kindled there must be some knowledge. The countryman reads little, and it is a long and tedious business before enough people are excited to bring them to the point of appealing to some expert to come in and advise.

More changes often take place within a dozen years after a co-operative society is first started than have taken place for a century previous. I am familiar with a district—in the north-west of Ireland. It was a most wretchedly poor district. The farmers were at the mercy of the gombeen traders and the agricultural middlemen. Then a dozen years ago a co-operative society was formed. I am sure that the oldest inhabitant would agree with me that more changes for the better for farmers have taken place since the co-operative society was started than he could remember in all his previous life. The reign of the gombeen man is over. The farmers control their own buying and selling. Their organization markets for them the eggs and poultry. It procures seeds, fertilizers, and domestic requirements. It turns the members' pigs into bacon. They have a village hall and a woman's organization. They sell the products of the women's industry. They have a co-operative band, social gatherings, and concerts. They have spread out into half-a-dozen parishes, going southward and westward with their propaganda, and in half-a-

dozen years, in all that district, previously without organization, there will be well-organized farmers' guilds, concentrating in themselves the trade of their district, having meeting-places where the opinion of the members can be taken, having a machinery, committees, and executive officers to carry out whatever may be decided on: and having funds, or profits, the joint property of the community, which can be drawn upon to finance their undertakings. It ought to be evident what a tremendous advantage it is to farmers in a district to have such organizations, what a lever they can pull and control. I have tried to indicate the difference between a rural population and a rural community, between a people loosely knit together by the vague ties of a common latitude and longitude, and people who are closely knit together in an association and who form a true social organism, a true rural community, where the general will can find expression and society is malleable to the general will. I assert that there never can be any progress in rural districts or any real prosperity without such farmers' organizations or guilds. Wherever rural prosperity is reported of any country inquire into it, and it will be found that it depends on rural organization. Wherever there is rural decay, if it is inquired into, it will be found that there was a rural population but no rural community, no organization, no guild to promote common interests and unite the countrymen in defence of them.

VI

It is the business of the rural reformer to create the rural community. It is the antecedent to the creation of a rural civilization. We have to organize the community so that it can act as one body. It is not enough to organize farmers in a district for one purpose only—in a credit society, a dairy society, a fruit society, a bacon factory, or in a co-operative store. All these may be and must be beginnings; but if they do not develop and absorb all rural business into their organization they will have little effect on character. No true social organism will have been created. If people unite as consumers to buy together they only come into contact on this one point; there is no general identity of interest. If co-operative societies are specialized for this purpose or that—as in Great Britain or on the Continent—to a large extent the limitation of objects prevents a true social organism from being formed. The latter has a tremendous effect on human character. The specialized society only develops economic efficiency. The evolution of humanity beyond its present level depends ab-

solutely on its power to unite and create true social organisms. Life in its higher forms is only possible because of the union of myriads of tiny lives to form a larger being, which manifests will, intelligence, affection, and the spiritual powers. The life of the amœba or any other unicellular organism is low compared with the life in more complex organisms, like the ant or bee. Man is the most highly developed living organism on the globe; yet his body is built up of innumerable cells, each of which might be described as a tiny life in itself. But they are built up in man into such a close association that what affects one part of the body affects all. The pain which the whole being feels if a part is wounded, if one cell in the human body is hurt, should prove that to the least intelligent. The nervous system binds all the tiny cells together, and they form in this totality a being infinitely higher, more powerful, than the cells which compose it. They are able to act together and achieve things impossible to the separated cells. Now humanity to-day is, to some extent, like the individual cells. It is trying to unite together to form a real organism, which will manifest higher qualities of life than the individual can manifest. But very few of the organisms created by society enable the individual to do this. The joint-stock companies or capitalist concerns which bring men together at this work or that do not yet make them feel their unity. Existence under a common government effects this still less. Our

modern states have not yet succeeded in building up that true national life where all feel the identity of interest; where the true civic or social feeling is engendered and the individual bends all his efforts to the success of the community on which his own depends; where, in fact, the ancient Greek conception of citizenship is realized, and individuals are created who are ever conscious of the identity of interest between themselves and their race. In the old Greek civilizations this was possible because their States were small, indeed their ideal State contained no more citizens than could be affected by the voice of a single orator. Such small States, though they produced the highest quality of life within themselves, are no longer possible as political entities. We have to see whether we could not, within our widespread nationalities, create communities by economic means, where something of the same sense of solidarity of interest might be engendered and the same quality of life maintained. I am greatly ambitious for the rural community. But it is no use having mean ambitions. Unless people believe the result of their labours will result in their equalling or surpassing the best that has been done elsewhere, they will never get very far. We in Ireland are in quest of a civilization. It is a great adventure, the building up of a civilization—the noblest which could be undertaken by any persons. It is at once the noblest and the most practical of all enterprises, and I can conceive of no greater exaltation for

the spirit of man than the feeling that his race is acting nobly; and that all together are performing a service, not only to each other, but to humanity and those who come after them, and that their deeds will be remembered. It may seem a grotesque juxtaposition of things essentially different in character, to talk of national idealism and then of farming, but it is not so. They are inseparable. The national idealism which will not go out into the fields and deal with the fortunes of the working farmers is false idealism. Our conception of a civilization must include, nay, must begin with the life of the humblest, the life of the average man or manual worker, for if we neglect them we will build in sand. The neglected classes will wreck our civilization. The pioneers of a new social order must think first of the average man in field or factory, and so unite these and so inspire them that the noblest life will be possible through their companionship. If you will not offer people the noblest and best they will go in search of it. Unless the countryside can offer to young men and women some satisfactory food for soul as well as body, it will fail to attract or hold its population, and they will go to the already overcrowded towns; and the lessening of rural production will affect production in the cities and factories, and the problem of the unemployed will get still keener. The problem is not only an economic problem. It is a human one. Man does not live by cash alone, but by every gift of fellowship and brotherly

feeling society offers him. The final urgings of men and women are towards humanity. Their desires are for the perfecting of their own life, and as Whitman says, where the best men and women are there the great city stands, though it is only a village. It is one of the illusions of modern materialistic thought to suppose that as high a quality of life is not possible in a village as in a great city, and it ought to be one of the aims of rural reformers to dissipate this fallacy, and to show that it is possible—not indeed to concentrate wealth in country communities as in the cities—but that it is possible to bring comfort enough to satisfy any reasonable person, and to create a society where there will be intellectual life and human interests. We will hear little then of the rural exodus. The country will retain and increase its population and productiveness. Like attracts like. Life draws life to itself. Intellect awakens intellect, and the country will hold its own tug for tug with the towns.

Now it may be said I have talked a long while round and round the rural community, but I have not suggested how it is to be created. I am coming to that. It really cannot be created. It is a natural growth when the right seed is planted. Co-operation is the seed. Let us consider Ireland. Twenty-five years ago there was not a single co-operative society in the country. Individualism was the mode of life. Every farmer manufactured and sold as seemed best in his eyes. It

was generally the worst possible way he could have chosen. Then came Sir Horace Plunkett and his colleagues, preaching co-operation. A creamery was established here, an agricultural society there, and having planted the ideas it was some time before the economic expert could decide whether they were planted in fertile soil. But that question was decided many years ago. The co-operative society, started for whatever purpose originally, is an omnivorous feeder, and it exercises a magnetic influence on all agricultural activities; so that we now have societies which buy milk, manufacture and sell butter, deal in poultry and eggs, cure bacon, provide fertilizers, feeding-stuffs, seeds, and machinery for their members, and even cater for every requirement of the farmer's household. This magnetic power of attracting and absorbing to themselves the various rural activities which the properly constituted co-operative societies have, makes them develop rapidly, until in the course of a decade or a generation there is created a real social organism, where the members buy together, manufacture together, market together, where finally their entire interests are bound up with the interests of the community. I believe in half a century the whole business of rural Ireland will be done co-operatively. This is not a wild surmise, for we see exactly the same process going on in Denmark, Germany, Italy, and every country where the co-operative seed was planted. Let us suppose that in a generation all the rural

industries are organized on co-operative lines, what kind of a community should we expect to find as the result? How would its members live? what would be their relations to one another and their community? The agricultural scientist is making great discoveries. The mechanical engineer goes from one triumph to another. The chemist already could work wonders in our fields if there was a machinery for him to work through. We cannot foretell the developments in each branch, but we can see clearly that the organized community can lay hold of discoveries and inventions which the individual farmer cannot. It is little for the co-operative society to buy expensive threshing sets and let its members have the use of them, but the individual farmer would have to save a long time before he could raise several hundred pounds. The society is a better buyer than the individual. It can buy things the individual cannot buy. It is a better producer also. The plant for a creamery is beyond the individual farmer; but our organized farmers in Ireland, small though they are, find it no trouble to erect and equip a creamery with plant costing two thousand pounds. The organized rural community of the future will generate its own electricity at its central buildings, and run not only its factories and other enterprises by this power, but will supply light to the houses of its members and also mechanical power to run machinery on the farm. One of our Irish societies already supplies electric

light for the town it works in. In the organized rural community the eggs, milk, poultry, pigs, cattle, grain, and wheat produced on the farm and not consumed, or required for further agricultural production, will automatically be delivered to the co-operative business centre of the district, where the manager of the dairy will turn the milk into butter or cheese, and the skim milk will be returned to feed the community's pigs. The poultry and egg department will pack and dispatch the fowl and eggs to market. The mill will grind the corn and return it ground to the member, or there may be a co-operative bakery to which some of it may go. The pigs will be dealt with in the abattoir, sent as fresh pork to the market or be turned into bacon to feed the members. We may be certain that any intelligent rural community will try to feed itself first, and will only sell the surplus. It will realize that it will be unable to buy any food half as good as the food it produces. The community will hold in common all the best machinery too expensive for the members to buy individually. The agricultural labourers will gradually become skilled mechanics, able to direct threshers, binders, diggers, cultivators, and new implements we have no conception of now. They will be members of the society, sharing in its profits in proportion to their wages, even as the farmer will in proportion to his trade. The co-operative community will have its own carpenters, smiths, mechanics, employed in its

workshop at repairs or in making those things which can profitably be made locally. There may be a laundry where the washing—a heavy burden for the women—will be done: for we may be sure that every scrap of power generated will be utilized. One happy invention after another will come to lighten the labour of life. There will be, of course, a village hall with a library and gymnasium, where the boys and girls will be made straight, athletic, and graceful. In the evenings, when the work of the day is done, if we went into the village hall we would find a dance going on or perhaps a concert. There might be a village choir or band. There would be a committee-room where the council of the community would meet once a week; for their enterprises would have grown, and the business of such a parish community might easily be over one hundred thousand pounds, and would require constant thought. There would be no slackness on the part of the council in attending, because their fortunes would depend on their communal enterprises, and they would have to consider reports from the managers and officials of the various departments. The co-operative community would be a busy place. In years when the society was exceptionally prosperous, and earned larger profits than usual on its trade, we should expect to find discussions in which all the members would join as to the use to be made of these profits: whether they should be altogether divided or what portion of them should be devoted

to some public purpose. We may be certain that there would be animated discussions, because a real solidarity of feeling would have arisen and a pride in the work of the community engendered, and they would like to be able to outdo the good work done by the neighbouring communities.

One might like to endow the village school with a chemical laboratory, another might want to decorate the village hall with reproductions of famous pictures, another might suggest removing all the hedges and planting the roadsides and lanes with gooseberry bushes, currant bushes, and fruit trees, as they do in some German communes to-day. There would be eloquent pleadings for this or that, for an intellectual heat would be engendered in this human hive, and there would be no more illiterates or ignoramuses. The teaching in the village school would be altered to suit the new social order, and the children of the community would, we may be certain, be instructed in everything necessary for the intelligent conduct of the communal business. The spirit of rivalry between one community and another, which exists to-day between neighbouring creameries, would excite the imagination of the members, and the organized community would be as swift to act as the unorganized community is slow to act. Intelligence would be organized as well as business. The women would have their own associations, to promote domestic economy, care of the sick and the children. The girls would have their own

industries of embroidery, crochet, lace, dress-making, weaving, spinning, or whatever new industries the awakened intelligence of women may devise and lay hold of as the peculiar labour of their sex. The business of distribution of the produce and industries of the community would be carried on by great federations, which would attend to export and sale of the products of thousands of societies. Such communities would be real social organisms. The individual would be free to do as he willed, but he would find that communal activity would be infinitely more profitable than individual activity. We would then have a real democracy carrying on its own business, and bringing about reforms without pleading to, or begging of, the State, or intriguing with or imploring the aid of political middlemen to get this, that, or the other done for them. They would be self-respecting, because they would be self-helping above all things. The national councils and meetings of national federations would finally become the real Parliament of the nation; for wherever all the economic power is centred, there also is centred all the political power. And no politician would dare to interfere with the organized industry of a nation.

There is nothing to prevent such communities being formed. They would be a natural growth once the seed was planted. We see such communities naturally growing up in Ireland, with perhaps a little stimulus from outside from rural

reformers and social enthusiasts. If this ideal of the organized rural community is accepted there will be difficulties, of course, and enemies to be encountered. The agricultural middleman is a powerful person. He will rage furiously. He will organize all his forces to keep the farmers in subjection, and to retain his peculiar functions of fleecing the farmer as producer and the general public as consumer. But unless we are determined to eliminate the middleman in agriculture we will fail to effect anything worth while attempting. I would lay down certain fundamental propositions which, I think, should be accepted without reserve as a basis of reform. First, that the farmers must be organized to have *complete* control over all the business connected with their industry. Dual control is intolerable. Agriculture will never be in a satisfactory condition if the farmer is relegated to the position of a manual worker on his land; if he is denied the right of a manufacturer to buy the raw materials of his industry on trade terms; if other people are to deal with his raw materials, his milk, cream, fruit, vegetables, live stock, grain, and other produce; and if these capitalist middle agencies are to manufacture the farmers' raw material into butter, bacon, or whatever else: are to do all the marketing and export, paying farmers what they please on the one hand, and charging the public as much as they can on the other hand. The existence of these middle agencies is responsible for a large proportion of

the increased cost of living, which is the most acute domestic problem of modern industrial communities. They have too much power over the farmer, and are too expensive a luxury for the consumer. It would be very unbusinesslike for any country to contemplate the permanence in national life of a class whose personal interests are always leading them to fleece both producer and consumer alike. So the first fundamental idea for reformers to get into their minds is that farmers, through their own co-operative organizations, must control the entire business connected with agriculture. There will not be so much objection to co-operative sale as to co-operative purchase by the farmers. But one is as necessary as the other. We must bear in mind, what is too often forgotten, that farmers are manufacturers, and as such are entitled to buy the raw materials for their industry at wholesale prices. Every other kind of manufacturer in the world gets trade terms when he buys. Those who buy—not to consume, but to manufacture and sell again—get their requirements at wholesale terms in every country in the world. If a publisher of books is approached by a bookseller he gives that bookseller trade terms, because he buys to sell again. If I, as a private individual, want one of those books I must pay the full retail price. Even the cobbler, the carpenter, the solitary artist, get trade terms. The farmer, who is as much a manufacturer as the shipbuilder, or the factory proprietor, is as much entitled to

trade terms when he buys the raw materials for his industry. His seeds, fertilizers, ploughs, implements, cake, feeding-stuffs are the raw materials of his industry, which he uses to produce wheat, beef, mutton, pork, or whatever else; and, in my opinion, there should be no differentiation between the farmer when he buys and any other kind of manufacturer. Is it any wonder that agriculture decays in countries where the farmers are expected to buy at retail prices and sell at wholesale prices? We must not, to save any friction, sell the rights of farmers. The second proposition I lay down is that this necessary organization work among the farmers must be carried on by an organizing body which is entirely controlled by those interested in agriculture—farmers and their friends. To ask the State or a State Department to undertake this work is to ask a body influenced and often controlled by powerful capitalists, and middle agencies which it should be the aim of the organization to eliminate. The State can, without obstruction from any quarter, give farmers a technical education in the science of farming; but let it once interfere with business, and a horde of angry interests set to work to hamper and limit by every possible means; and compromises on matters of principle, where no compromise ought to be permitted, are almost inevitable.

A voluntary organizing body like the Irish Agricultural Organization Society, which was the first to attempt the co-operative organization

of farmers in these islands, is the only kind of body which can pursue its work fearlessly, unhampered by alien interests. The moment such a body declares its aims, its declaration automatically separates the sheep from the goats, and its enemies are outside and not inside. The organizing body should be the heart and centre of the farmers' movement, and if the heart has its allegiance divided, its work will be poor and ineffectual, and very soon the farmers will fall away from it to follow more single-hearted leaders. No trades union would admit representatives of capitalist employers on its committee, and no organization of farmers should allow alien or opposing interest on their councils to clog the machine or betray the cause. This is the best advice I can give reformers. It is the result of many years' experience in this work. An industry must have the same freedom of movement as an individual in possession of all his powers. An industry divided against itself can no more prosper than a household divided against itself. By the means I have indicated the farmers can become the masters of their own destinies, just as the urban workers can, I think, by steadfastly applying the same principles, emancipate themselves. It is a battle in which, as in all other battles, numbers and moral superiority united are irresistible; and in the Irish struggle to create a true democracy numbers and the power of moral ideas are with the insurgents.

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will in modern times remain long in a country. Employers often act as if they thought labour could be taken up and laid down again like a pipe and tobacco. None have contributed so to thicken the horde of Irish exiles as the rural labourers. Three hundred thousand of them in less than my lifetime have left the fields of Ireland for the factories of the new world. Yet I can only rejoice if Irishmen, who are badly dealt with in their motherland, find an ampler life and a more prosperous career in another land. A wage of ten or eleven shillings a week will bind none but the unaspiring lout to his country. But I would like to make Ireland a land which, because of the human kindness in it, few would willingly leave. The agricultural proletarian, like all other labour, should be organized in a national union. That is bound to come. But the agricultural labourer should, I think, no more than labour in the cities, make the raising of wages his main or only object. He should rather strive to make himself economically independent; or, in the alternative, seek for status by integration into the co-operative communities of farmers by becoming a member, and by pressing for permanent employment by the community rather than casual employment by the individual. Agricultural labour undoubtedly will have to struggle for better remuneration. Yet it has to be remembered that agriculture is a protean industry. It is not like mining, where the colliery produces coal and nothing but coal, and where the miners

have a practical monopoly of supply. If miners are dissatisfied with wages and are well organized they can enforce their terms, and the colliery owners may almost be indifferent, because they can charge the increased cost of working to the public. But agriculture, as I said, is protean and changes its forms perpetually. If tillage does not pay this year, next year the farmer may have his land in grass. He reverts to the cheapest methods of farming when prices are low, or labour asks a wage which the farmer believes it would be unprofitable to pay. In this way pressure on the farmer for extra wages might result in two men being employed to herd cows where a dozen men were previously employed at tillage. The farmer cannot easily—as the mine-owner—unload his burden on the general public by the increase of prices. There are many difficulties, which seem almost insoluble, if we propose to ourselves to integrate the rural labourer into the general economic life of the country by making him a partner in the industry he works on. But what I hope for most is first that the natural evolution of the rural community, and the concentration of individual manufacture, purchase and sale, into communal enterprises, will lead to a very large co-operative ownership of expensive machinery, which will necessitate the communal employment of labour. If this takes place, as I hope it will, the rural labourer, instead of being a manual worker using primitive implements, will have the status of a skilled mechanic employed per-

manently by a co-operative community. He should be a member of the society which employs him, and in the division of profits receive in proportion to his wage, as the farmers in proportion to their trade.

A second policy open to agricultural labour when it becomes organized is the policy of collective farming. This I believe will and ought to receive attention in the future. Co-operative societies of agricultural labourers in Italy, Roumania, and elsewhere have rented land from landowners. They then reallotted the land among themselves for individual cultivation, or else worked it as a true co-operative enterprise with labour, purchase and sale all communal enterprises, with considerable benefit to the members. We can well understand a landowner not liking to divide his land into small holdings, with all the attendant troubles which in Ireland beset a landlord with small farmers on his estate. But I think landowners in Ireland could be found who would rent land to a co-operative society of skilled labourers who approached the owner with a well-thought-out scheme. The success of one colony would lead to others being started, as happened in Italy.

This solution of the problem of agricultural labour will be forced on us for many reasons. The economic effects of the great European War, the burden of debt piled on the participating nations, will make Ministers shun schemes of reform involving a large use of national credit,

or which would increase the sum of national obligations. Land purchase on the old terms I believe cannot be continued. Yet we will demand the intensive cultivation of the national estate, and increased production of wealth, especially of food-stuffs. The large area of agricultural land laid down for pasture is not so productive as tilled land, does not sustain so large a population, and there will be more reasons in the future than in the past for changing the character of farming in these areas. The policy of collective farming offers a solution, and whatever Government is in power should facilitate the settlement of men in co-operative colonies and provide expert instructors as managers for the first year or two if necessary. Such a policy would not be so expensive as land purchase, and with fair rent fixed, hundreds of thousands of people could be planted comfortably on the land in Ireland and produce more wealth from it than could ever be produced from grazing lands, and agricultural workers and the sons of farmers who now emigrate could become economically independent.

I hope, also, that farmers, becoming more brotherly as their own enterprises flourish, will welcome labourers into their co-operative stores, credit banks, poultry and bee-keeping societies, and allow them the benefits of cheap purchase, cheap credit, and of efficient marketing of whatever the labourer may produce on his allotment. The growth of national conscience and the spirit of human brotherhood, and a feeling of shame

that any should be poor and neglected in the national household, will be needed to bring the rural labourer into the circle of national life, and make him a willing worker in the general scheme. If farmers will not, on their part, advance towards their labourers and bring them into the co-operative community, then labour will be organized outside their community and will be hostile, and will be always brooding and scheming to strike a blow when the farmer can least bear it,—when the ground must be tilled or the harvest gathered. And this, if peace cannot be made, will result in a still greater decline of tillage and the continued flight of the rural labourers, and the increase of the area in grass, and the impoverishing of human life and national well-being.

Some policy to bring contentment to small holders and rural workers must be formulated and acted upon. Agriculture is of more importance to the nation than industry. Our task is to truly democratize civilization and its agencies; to spread in widest commonalty culture, comfort, intelligence, and happiness, and to give to the average man those things which in an earlier age were the privileges of a few. The country is the fountain of the life and health of a race. And this organization of the country people into co-operative communities will educate them and make them citizens in the true sense of the word, that is, people continually conscious of their identity of interest with those about them.

It is by this conscious sense of solidarity of interest, which only the organized co-operative community can engender in modern times, that the higher achievements of humanity become possible. Religion has created this spirit at times—witness the majestic cathedrals the Middle Ages raised to manifest their faith. Political organization engendered the passion of citizenship in the Greek States, and the Parthenon and a host of lordly buildings crowned the hills and uplifted and filled with pride the heart of the citizen. Our big countries, our big empires, and republics, for all their military strength and science, and the wealth which science has made it possible for man to win, do not create citizenship because of the loose organization of society; because individualism is rampant, and men, failing to understand the intricacies of the vast and complex life of their country, fall back on private life and private ambitions, and leave the honour of their country and the making of laws and the application of the national revenues to a class of professional politicians, in their turn in servitude to the interests which supply party funds, and so we find corruption in high places and cynicism in the people. It is necessary for the creation of citizens, for the building up of a noble national life, that the social order should be so organized that this sense of interdependence will be constantly felt. It is also necessary for the preservation of the physical health and beauty of our race that our people should live

more in the country and less in the cities. I believe it would be an excellent thing for humanity if its civilization could be based on rural industry mainly and not on urban industry. More and more men and women in our modern civilization drift out of Nature, out of sweet air, health, strength, beauty, into the cities, where in the third generation there is a rickety population, mean in stature, vulgar or depraved in character, with the image of the devil in mind and matter more than the image of Deity. Those who go like it at first; but city life is like the roll spoken of by the prophet, which was sweet in the mouth but bitter in the belly. The first generation are intoxicated by the new life, but in the third generation the cord is cut which connected them with Nature, the Great Mother, and life shrivels up, sundered from the source of life. Is there any prophet, any statesman, any leader, who will—as Moses once led the Israelites out of the Egyptian bondage—excite the human imagination and lead humanity back to Nature, to sunlight, starlight, earth-breath, sweet air, beauty, gaiety, and health? Is it impossible now to move humanity by great ideas, as Mahomet fired his dark hosts to forgetfulness of life; or as Peter the Hermit awakened Europe to a frenzy, so that it hurried its hot chivalry across a continent to the Holy Land? Is not the earth mother of us all? Are not our spirits clothed round with the substance of earth? Is it not from Nature we draw life? Do we not perish without sunlight and

fresh air? Let us have no breath of air and in five minutes life is extinct. Yet in the cities there is a slow poisoning of life going on day by day. The lover of beauty may walk the streets of London or any big city and may look into ten thousand faces and see none that is lovely. Is not the return of man to a natural life on the earth a great enough idea to inspire humanity? Is not the idea of a civilization amid the green trees and fields under the smokeless sky alluring? Yes, but men say there is no intellectual life working on the land. No intellectual life when man is surrounded by mystery and miracle! When the mysterious forces which bring to birth and life are yet undiscovered; when the earth is teeming with life, and the dumb brown lips of the ridges are breathing mystery! Is not the growth of a tree from a tiny cell hidden in the earth as provocative of thought as the things men learn at the schools? Is not thought on these things more interesting than the sophistries of the newspapers? It is only in Nature, and by thought on the problems of Nature, that our intellect grows to any real truth and draws near to the Mighty Mind which laid the foundations of the world.

Our civilizations are a nightmare, a bad dream. They have no longer the grandeur of Babylon or Nineveh. They grow meaner and meaner as they grow more urbanized. What could be more depressing than the miles of poverty-stricken streets around the heart of our modern cities?

The memory lies on one " heavy as frost and deep almost as life." It is terrible to think of the children playing on the pavements ; the depletion of vitality, with artificial stimulus supplied from the flaring drink-shops. The spirit grows heavy as if death lay on it while it moves amid such things. And outside these places the clouds are flying overhead snowy and spiritual as of old, the sun is shining, the winds are blowing, the fields are green, the forests are murmuring leaf to leaf, but the magic that God made is unknown to these poor folk. The creation of a rural civilization is the greatest need of our time. It may not come in our days, but we can lay the foundations of it, preparing the way for the true prophet when he will come. The fight now is not to bring people back to the land, but to keep those who are on the land contented, happy, and prosperous. And we must begin by organizing them to defend what is left to them ; to take back, industry by industry, what was stolen from them. We must organize the country people into communities, for without some kind of communal life men hold no more together than the drifting sands by the seashore. There is a natural order in which men have instinctively grouped themselves from the dawn of time. It is as natural to them to do so as it is for bees to build their hexagonal cells. If we read the history of civilization we will find people in every land forming little clans co-operating together. Then the ambition of rulers or warriors breaks

them up; the greed of powerful men puts an end to them. But, whether broken or not, the moment the rural dweller is left to himself he begins again, with nature prompting him, to form little clans—or nations rather—with his fellows, and it is there life has been happiest. We did this in ancient Ireland. The baronies whose names are on Irish land to-day and the counties are survivals of these old co-operative colonies, where the men owned the land together and elected their own leaders, and formed their own social order and engendered passionate loyalties and affections. It was so in every land under the sun. It was so in ancient India and in ancient Peru. The European farmers, and we in Ireland along with them, are beginning again the eternal task of building up a civilization in nature—the task so often disturbed, the labour so often destroyed. And it is with the hope that we in Ireland will build truly and nobly that I have put together these thoughts on the rural community.

VIII

We may now consider the proletarian in our cities. The worker in our modern world is the subject of innumerable unapplied doctrines. The lordliest things are predicated of him, which do not affect in the least the relationship with him of those who employ his labour. The ancient wisdom, as it is recounted to him on God's day, assures him of his immortality: that the divine signature is over all his being, that in some way he is co-related with the Eternal, that he is fashioned in a likeness to It. He is a symbol of God Himself. He is the child of Deity. His life is Its very breath. The Habitations of Eternity await his coming, and the divine event to which he moves is the dwelling within him of the Divine Mind, so that Deity may become his very self. So proud a tale is told of him, and when he wakens on the morrow after the day of God he finds that none will pay him reverence. He, the destined comrade of Seraphim and Cherubim, is herded with other Children of the King in fœtid slum and murky alleys, where the devil hath his many mansions, where light and

air, the great purifiers, are already dimmed and corrupted before they do him service. He is insecure in the labour by which he lives. He works to-day, and to-morrow he may be told there is no further need for him, and his fate and the fate of those dependent on him are not remembered by those who dismissed him. If he dies, leaving wife or children, the social order makes but the most inhuman provision for them. How ghastly is the brotherhood of the State for its poor the workhouses declare, and our social decrees which turn loving-kindness into official acts and make legal and formal what should be natural impulse and the overflow of the heart. So great a disparity exists between spiritual theory and the realities of the social order that it might almost be said that spiritual theory has no effect at all on our civilization, and its inhuman contours seem softened at no point where we could say, "Here the Spirit has mastery. Here God possesses the world."

The imagination, following the worker in our industrial system, sees him labouring without security in his work, in despair, locked out, on strike, living in slums, rarely with enough food for health, bringing children into the world who suffer from malnutrition from their earliest years, a pauper when his days of strength are passed. He dies in charitable institutions. Though his labours are necessary he is yet not integrated into the national economy. He has no share of his own in the wealth of the nation. He cannot

claim work as a right from the holders of economic power, and this absolute dependence upon the autocrats of industry for a livelihood is the greatest evil of any, for it puts a spiritual curse on him and makes him in effect a slave. Instinctively he adopts a servile attitude to those who can sentence him and his children to poverty and hunger without trial or judgment by his peers. A hasty word, and he may be told to draw his pay and begone. The spiritual wrong done him by the social order is greater than the material ill, and that spiritual wrong is no less a wrong because generation after generation of workers have grown up and are habituated to it, and do not realize the oppression; because in childhood circumstance and the black art of education alike conspire to make the worker humble in heart and to take the crown and sceptre from his spirit, and his elders are already tamed and obsequious.

Yet the workers in the modern world have great qualities. This class in great masses will continually make sacrifices for the sake of a principle. They have lived so long in the depths: many of them have reached the very end of all—the pain which is the utmost life can bear—and have in their character that fearlessness which comes from long endurance and familiarity with the worst hardships. I am a literary man, a lover of ideas, and I have found few people in my life who would sacrifice anything for a social principle; but I will never forget the exultation

with which I realized in a great labour trouble, when the masters of industry issued a document asking men on peril of dismissal to swear never to join a trades union, that there were thousands of men in my own city who refused to obey, though they had no membership or connection with the objectionable association. Nearly all the real manhood of Dublin I found was among the obscure myriads who are paid from twenty to thirty shillings a week. The men who will sacrifice anything for brotherhood get rarer and rarer above that limit of wealth. These men would not sign away their freedom, their right to choose their own heroes and their own ideals. Most of them had no strike funds to fall back on. They had wives and children depending on them. Quietly and grimly they took through hunger the path to the Heavenly City, yet nobody praised them, no one put a crown upon their brows. Beneath their rags and poverty there was in these obscure men a nobility of spirit. It is in these men and the men in the cabins in the country that the hope of Ireland lies. The poor have always helped each other, and it is they who listen eagerly to the preachers of a social order based on brotherhood in industry. It is these workers, always necessary but never yet integrated into the social order, who must be educated, who must be provided for, who must be accepted fully as comrade in any scheme of life to be devised and which would call itself Christian. That word, expressing the noblest

and most spiritual conception of humanity, has been so degraded by misuse in the world that we could almost hate it with the loathing we have for evil, if we did not know that Hell can as disguise put on the outward garments of Heaven. Yet what is eternally true remains pure and uncorrupted, and those who turn to it find it there—as all finally must turn to it to fulfil their destiny of inevitable beauty.

IX

Often with sadness I hear people speak of industrial development in Ireland, for I feel they contemplate no different system than that which fills workers with despair in countries where it is more successfully applied. All these energetic people are conspiring to build factories and mills and to fill them with human labour, and they believe the more they do this the better it will be for Ireland. They talk of Ireland as if it was only admirable as a quantity rather than a quality. They express delight at swelling statistics and increased trade, but where do we hear any reflection on the quality of life engendered by this industrial development? Our civilization is to differ in no way from any other. No new ideal of life is suggested to differentiate us. We are to go on exploiting human labour. Our working classes are to increase and multiply and earn profits for an employing class, as labour has done from time immemorial in Babylon, in Nineveh, in Rome, and in London to-day. But a choice yet remains to us, because the character of our civilization is not yet fixed. It is mainly

germinal. It fills the spirit with weariness to think of another nation following the old path, without thought or imagination of other roads leading to new and more beautiful life. Every now and then, when the world was still vast and full of undiscovered wonders, some adventurers would leave the harbour, and steer their galleys past the known coast and the familiar cities and over untravelled seas, seeking some new land where life might be freer and ampler than that they had known. Is the old daring gone? Are there not such spirits among us ready to join in the noblest of all adventures—the building up of a civilization—so that the human might reflect the divine order? In the divine order there is both freedom and solidarity. It is the virtue of the soul to be free and its nature to love; and when it is free and acts by its own will it is most united with all other life. Those planetary spirits who move in solemn motion about the heavens I do not conceive as the slaves of Deity but as its adorers. But that material nature in which the soul is embodied has the dividing quality of the prism, which resolves pure light into distinct rays; and so on earth we get the principle of freedom and the virtue of solidarity as separated ideals continually at warfare with each other, and the reconcilement on earth of these principles in man is the conquest of matter by the spirit. This dramatic sundering on earth of virtues in unison in the heavens explains the struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism,

between nationality and imperialism, between individualist and socialist, between dynamic and static in philosophy. Indeed in the last analysis all human conflicts are the balancing on earth of the manifestation of divine principles which are one in the unmanifest spirit.

The civilization we create, the social order we build up, must provide for essential freedom for the individual and for solidarity of the nation. Now essential freedom is denied to men if they are in their condition servile. Can we contemplate the permanent existence of a servile class in Ireland? For, disguise it how we will, our present industrial system is practically a form of slavery for the workers, differing in externals only from the ages when the serf had a collar round his neck. He has now freedom to change from master to master, and can even seek for a master in other countries; but he must, in any case, accept the relation of servant to master. The old slave could be whipped. In the new order the wage slave can be starved, and the fact that many of the rulers of industry use their power benevolently does not make the existing relation between employer and employed right, or the social order one whose permanence can be justified. Men will gladly labour if they feel that their labour conspires with that of all other workers for the general good; but there is something loathsome to the spirit in the condition of the labour market, where labour is regarded as a commodity to be bought and sold like soap or

candles. For that truly describes how it is with labour in our industrial system: we can buy labour, which means we can buy human life and thought, a portion of God's being, and make a profit out of it. By so selling himself the worker is enslaved and limited in a thousand ways. The power of dismissal of one person by another at whim acts against independence of character, or the free expression of opinion in thought, in politics, and in religion. The soul is stunted in its growth, and spiritual life made subordinate to material interests. To deny essential freedom to the soul is the greatest of all crimes, and such denial has in all ages evoked the deepest anger among men. When freedom has been threatened nations have risen up maddened and exultant, and the clang of martial arms has been heard and the stony kings of the past have been encountered in battle. In Ireland we shall have our greatest fight of all to gain this freedom: not alone material independence for man, but the freedom of the soul, its right to choose its own heroes and its own ideals without let or hindrance by other men.

We have many of the vices of a slave race, and we treat others as we have been treated. Our national aspirations were overborne by material power, and we in turn use cudgel and curse on our countrymen when they differ from us in opinion and policy. Men, when they cannot match their intellect against another's, suppress him and howl him down, putting faith in their

own brainlessness. I would make the most passionate plea for freedom in Ireland: freedom for all to say the truth they feel or know. What right have we to ask for ourselves what we deny to another? The bludgeon at meetings is a blow struck against heaven. Those who will not argue or reason are recreants against humanity, and are prowling back again on all fours in their minds to the brute. It matters not in what holy name men war with violence on freedom of thought, whether in the name of God or nation they are enemies of both. We are only right in controversy when we overcome by a superior beauty or truth. The first fundamental idea inspiring an Irish polity should be this idea of freedom in all spheres of thought, and it is most necessary to fight for this because the devil and hell have organized their forces in this unfortunate land in sectarian and secret societies, of which it might be written they love darkness rather than light for the old God-given reasons.

X

WHENEVER in Ireland there has been a revolt of labour it too often finds arrayed against it the press, the law, and the police. All the great powers are in entente. The press, without inquiry, begins a detestable cant about labour agitators misleading ignorant men. Every wild phrase uttered by an exasperated worker is quoted against the cause of labour, and its grievances are suppressed. We are told nothing about how the worker lives: what homes, what food, his wage will provide. The journalist holds up a moral umbrella, protecting society from the fiery hail of conscience. The baser sort of clergyman will take up the parable and begin advocating a servile peace, glibly misinterpreting the divine teaching of love to prove that the lamb should lie down inside the lion, and only so can it be saved soul and body, forgetful that the peace which was Christ's gift to humanity was the peace of God which passes all understanding, and that it was a spiritual quietude, and that on earth—the underworld—the gospel in realization was to bring not peace but a sword.

The law, assured of public opinion, then deals sternly with whatever unfortunate life is driven into its pens. I am putting very mildly the devilish reality, for society is so constituted that the public, kept in ignorance of the real facts, believes that it is acting rightly, and so the devil has conscience on his side and that divine power is turned to infernal uses. What can labour oppose to this federation of State and Church, of press and law, of capital and physical force to back capital, when it sets about its own liberation and to institute a new social order to replace autocracy in industry? Its allies are few. A rare thinker, scientist, literary man, artist or clergyman, impelled by hatred of what is ugly in life, will speak on its behalf, and may render some aid and help to tear holes in that moral shield held up by the press, and may here and there give to that blinded public a vision of the Hosts of the Lord arrayed against it. But the only real power the workers can truly rely on is their own. Nothing but a spiritual revolution or an economic revolution will bring other classes into comradeship with them. The ideal labour should set before itself is not a transitory improvement in its wage, because a wage war never truly or permanently improves the position of labour. This section or that may, relatively to its own past or the position of other workers, improve itself; but capital is like a ship which, however the tide rises or falls, floats upon it, and is not sunken more deeply in the water at high tide

than at low tide. Whenever any burden is placed upon capital it immediately sets about unloading that burden on the public. Wages might be doubled by Act of Parliament, and the net result would be to double prices, if not to increase them still more. The more the autocrats of industry are federated the more easily can they unload on others any burden placed on them.

The value of money is simply what it will purchase at any time. If the rulers of industry can halve the purchasing power of money while doubling wages at the command of the State, logic leads us to assume that wages boards, arbitration boards and the like can only be transitory in their meliorating effect; and to pursue the attack on the autocrats of industry by the road of wages alone is to attack them where they are impregnable, and where, seeming to give way, they are all the while really losing nothing, and are only fixing the wage system more permanently on those who attack them. There are fiery spirits among the proletarians who hope that militant labour will at last bring about the social revolution, taking the earthly paradise by violence. They believe that if every worker dropped his tools and absolutely refused to work under the old system, it would be impossible to continue it. That is true, but those who advocate this policy slur over many difficulties, and the relative power of endurance of both parties. They do not, I think, take into account the immense power in the hands of those who uphold the present system.

Those who might be expected to strike are not—at least in Ireland—a majority of the population. They would have far fewer material resources to fall back on than those others whose interests would lead them to preserve the present social order. It is clear, too, when we analyse the forces at the command of labour and capital, that the latter has attached to itself by the bonds of self-interest the scientific men—engineers, inventors, chemists, bacteriologists, designers, organizers, all the intellect of industry—without which, in alliance with itself, revolting labour would be unable to continue production as before. Labour so revolting might indeed for a time bring the work of the nation to a standstill; but unless it could by some means attract to itself men of the class described, it would not be able to take the helm of the ship of industry and guide it with knowledge as the holders of economic power have done in the past. A policy of emancipation should provide labour with a means of attracting to itself that kind of knowledge which is gained in universities, laboratories, colleges of science, and, above all, in the actual guidance of great industrial enterprises. In any trial of endurance those who start with the greatest intellectual, moral, and material resources will win.

I do not deny that the strike is a powerful weapon in the hand of labour, but it is one with which it is difficult to imagine labour dealing a knock-out blow to the present social order. I believe in an orderly evolution of society, at least

in Ireland, and doubt whether by revolution people can be raised to an intelligence, a humanity, or a nobility of nature greater than they formerly possessed. Nobody can remain standing on tiptoe. After a little time disorder subsides and some strong man leads the inevitable reaction. In France people revolted against a decadent monarchy, and in a dozen years they had a new emperor. In England they beheaded a king as a protest against tyranny, and they got a dictator in his place who took little or no account of parliaments; and finally a second Charles, rather worse than the first, came to the throne. The everlasting battle between light and darkness goes on stubbornly all the time, and the gain of the Hosts of Light is inch by inch. Extraordinary efforts, impetuous charges, which seem to win for a moment, too often leave the attacking force tired and exhausted, and the forces of reaction set in and overwhelm them. I am the friend of revolt if people cannot stand the conditions they live under, and if they can see no other way. It is better to be men than slaves. The French Revolution was a tragic episode in history, but when people suffer intolerably and are insulted in their despair it is inevitable blood will be shed. One can only say with Whitman:

> Pale, silent, stern, what could I say to that long-accrued retribution?
> Could I wish humanity different?
> Could I wish the people made of wood and stone, or that there be no justice in destiny or time?

There is danger in revolution if the revolutionary spirit is much more advanced than the intellectual and moral qualities which alone can secure the success of a revolt. These intellectual and moral qualities—the skill to organize, the wisdom to control large undertakings, are not natural gifts but the results of experience. They are evolutionary products. The emancipation of labour, I believe, will not be gained by revolution but by prolonged effort, continued month by month and year by year, in which first this thing is adventured, then that; each enterprise brings its own gifts of wisdom and experience, and there is no reaction, because, instead of the violent use of certain powers, the whole being is braced: experience, intellect, desire, all strong and working harmoniously, press forward and support each other, and no enterprise is undertaken where the intellect to carry it out is not present together with the desire. It requires great intellectual and moral qualities to bring about a revolution. A rage at present conditions is not enough.

XI

Our farmers are already free. The problem with them is not now concerned with freedom, but how they may be brought into a solidarity with each other and the nation. To make our proletarians free and masters of their own energies, in unison with each other and the national being, is the most pressing labour of the many before us. Unless there be economic freedom there can be no other freedom. The right of no individual to subsistence should be at the good will of any other individual. More than mere comfort depends on it. There are eternal and august rights of the soul to be safeguarded, and the economic position of men should be protected by organization and democratic law. I have already discussed some of the avenues through which workers in our time have looked with hope. I have little belief that these roads lead anywhere but back to the old City of Slavery, however they may seem to curve away at the outset. The strike, on whatever scale, is no way to freedom, though the strike—or the threat of it—may bring wages nearer to subsistence level. The art of warfare is too much in the hands of specialists

for trust to be placed in revolution. A machine-gun with a few experts behind it is worth a thousand revolutionary workers, however maddened they may be. Does political action, on which so many rely, promise more? I do not believe it does. I believe that to appeal to legislatures is to appeal to bodies dominated by those interested in maintaining the present social order, although they may act so as to redress the worst evils created by it. In Ireland, for this generation at least, it would be impossible to secure in a legislative assembly majorities representative of the class we wish to see emancipated. It may seem as if I had closed all the paths out of the social labyrinth; but the way to emancipation has, I think, already been surveyed by pioneers. A policy of social reconstruction is practical, and needs but steady persistence for its realization. That policy—I refer to co-operative action—has been adopted in various forms by workers in many countries; and what is needed here is to study and co-ordinate these applications of co-working, and to form a general staff of labour who will, on behalf of the workers, examine the weapons fashioned by their class elsewhere, and who will draw up a plan of campaign as the staff of an army do previous to military operations. It will be found that economic action along co-operative lines has, in one country, barriers placed before its expansion which could be set aside by supplementing this action by methods elaborated by the genius of workers elsewhere.

It is not my purpose here to repeat in detail methods of organization, partly technical, which can be found fully described in many admirable books, but rather to indicate the order of advance, the methods of co-ordination of these, and their final absorption and transformation in the national being. There is a great deal of ignorance about things essential to safe action. When men are filled with enthusiasm they are apt to apply their new principles rashly in schemes which are bound to fail, just as over-confident soldiers will in battle sometimes rush a position prematurely which they cannot hold, because the general line of their army has not advanced sufficiently to support them. Sacrifices are made with no permanent result, and the morale of the army is injured.

In the rural districts the advance must, in the nature of things, be from production to consumption, and with urban workers inversely from a control over distribution to a mastery over production. I have often wondered over the blindness of workers in towns in Ireland, who have made so little use in the economic struggle of the freedom they have to spend their wage where they choose. They speak of this struggle as the class war; but they carry on the conflict most energetically where it is most difficult for them to succeed, and hardly at all where it would be comparatively easy for them to weaken the resources of their antagonists. In warfare much use is made of flanking movements, which aim

at cutting the enemy's communication with his base of supply. Frontal attacks are dangerous. It is equally true in economic warfare. The strike is a frontal attack, and those they fight are entrenched deeply with all the artillery of the State, the press, science, and wealth on their side. What would we think of an army which, at the close of each week's fighting, voluntarily surrendered to the enemy the ground, guns, ammunition, and prisoners captured through the previous six days? Yet this is what our workers do. The power opposed to them is mainly economic, though there is an intellectual basis for it also. But the wages of the workers, little for the individual, yet a large part of the national income if taken for the mass, goes back to strengthen the system they protest against through purchases of domestic requirements. The creation of co-operative stores ought to be the first constructive policy adopted by Irish labour. It ought to be as much a matter of class honour with them to be members of stores as to be in the trade union of their craft. The store may be regarded as the commissariat department of the army of labour. Many a strike has failed of its object, and the workers have gone back defeated, because their neglect of the commissariat made them unable to hold out for that last week when both sides are desperate and at the end of their resources. But it is not mainly as an aid to the strike that I advocate democratizing the distributive trade, but because control over distribution gives a large

measure of control over production. The history of co-operative workshops indicates that these have rarely been successful unless worked in conjunction with distributive stores. The retail trader is not sympathetic with co-operative production. As the cat is akin to the tiger, so is the individual trader—no matter on how small a scale he operates—a kinsman of the great autocrats of industry, and he will sympathize with his economic kinsmen and will retail their goods in preference to those produced in co-operative workshops.

The control of agencies of distribution by the workers at a certain stage in their development enables them to start productive enterprises with more safety and less expense in regard to advertisement than the capitalist can. In fact the co-operative store, properly organized, creates a tied trade for the output of co-operative workshops. It is a source of financial aid to these, and will invest funds in them and assist trades unions gradually to transform themselves into co-operative guilds of producers which should be their ultimate ideal. As I shall show later on, the store will enable the urban worker to enter into intimate alliance with the rural producer. Their interests are really identical. In every town in Ireland efforts should be made to democratize the distributive agencies, and the workers will have many allies in this, driven by the increased cost of living to search out the most economical agencies of purchase. If the proletarians are

not in a majority in Ireland—a nation where the farmers are the most numerous single class—they certainly form the majority in the cities; and the co-operative store, while admitting to membership all who will apply, ought to be and would be sympathetic with the efforts of labour to emancipate itself, and would be a powerful lever in its hands. As the stores increase in number, an analysis of their trade will reveal year by year in what directions co-operative production of particular articles may safely be attempted. More and more by this means the producing power and the capital at the disposal of the worker will be placed at the service of democracy. The first steps are the most difficult. In due time the workers will have educated a number of their members, and will have attached to themselves men of proved capacity to be the leaders in fresh enterprises, manufactures of one kind or another, democratic banking institutions, all supporting each other and leaning on each other and playing into each other's hands.

The extent to which this may be carried, and the opportunities for making Ireland a co-operative democracy, I shall presently explain. I do not regard any of these forms of co-operative organization as ideal or permanent. The co-operative movement must be regarded rather as a great turning movement on the part of humanity towards the ideal. The co-operative organizations now being formed in Ireland and over the world will, I am certain, persist and

outlast this generation and the next, and will grow into vaster things than we dream of; but the really important change they will bring about in the minds of men will be psychological. Men will become habituated to the thought of common action for the common good. To get so far in civil life is a great step. To-day our civil life is a tangle of petty personal interests and competitions. The co-operative movement is, as I have said, a vast turning movement of humanity heavenwards, or, at least, to bring them face round to the Delectable City. When this psychological change takes place the democratic associations—which have grown up haphazard as the workers found it easiest to create them—will be changed and remodelled by men who will have the mass of people behind them in their efforts to make a more majestic structure of society for the enlargement of the lives and spirits of men.

XII

We have descended from the national soul to the material plane, and we must still continue here for a time, because the doctrine that a sane mind can only manifest through a sane body is as true in reference to the State as to the individual, and necessitates a study of social fabrics. The soul creates tendencies and habits in the body, and the body repeats these vibrations automatically and infects the soul again with its old desires. Our religious hatreds created sectarian organizations, and these react again in the national soul, which would, I believe, willingly pass away from that mood, but finds itself incarnated in organizations habituated to sectarian action, and its energies are turned into these hateful channels unwillingly. So a drunkard who now realizes that intemperance is rotting his nature is conquered by the appetites he set up in the past, and with his soul in rebellion he yet satisfies the craving in the body. The individualism in our economic life reacts on the national being, and prevents concerted action for the general good. We have yet to create harmony of purpose in

our economic life, and to bring together interests long separated and unmindful of each other, and make them realize that their interests are identical. It is one of the commonplaces of economics that urban and rural interests are identical: but in truth the townsman and the countryman have always acted as if their interests were opposed, and they know very little of each other. I never like to let these commonplaces of economics pass my frontiers unless they give the countersign to the challenge for truth. People declare in the same way that the interests of labour and capital are identical, and implore them not to fight with one another. But the truth of that statement seems to me to depend largely on whether capital owns labour or labour owns capital. As an abstract proposition it is one of the economic formulæ I would leave instructions at my frontiers to have detained until further inquiry as to its antecedents. All these statements may be true, but to make them operative, to give them a dynamic rather than a static character, we must convince people they are true by close argument and still more so by realistic illustration.

To bring about a high nobility in the national soul we must make harmony in its economic life, and the two main currents of economic energy—the agricultural and urban—must be made to flow so that their action will not defeat each other. Let us take the farmer first. How ought he to wish to see life in the towns develop?

Should he wish for the triumph of labour or capital: the success of the co-operative movement, the triumph of the multiple shop or the private trader, of guilds of workers or autocrats of industry? Economic desires generally depend on the nature of the industry men are engaged in. The jeweller would probably desire the permanence of the social order which created most wealthy people who could afford to buy his wares. The farmer's industry, if we consider it closely, is the most democratic of any in its application to society. The produce of the farm, in its final distribution, is divided into portions more or less equal and conditioned in quantity by the digestive powers of an individual. The wealthiest millionaire cannot eat more bread, butter, meat, vegetables, or fruit than the manual labourer would eat if the latter could afford to get such things. In fact he would eat rather less, because the manual worker has a much better appetite, indeed requires more food. It appears to be the interest of the farmer to support any urban movement whose object it is to see that every worker in the towns is remunerated so that he, his wife, and his children can procure as much food as they require. Any underpaid worker in the towns is a wrong to the farmer—a willing customer who yet cannot buy. If there is, let us say, a sum of fifteen hundred pounds a week to be paid away in a town, it is to the interest of farmers that that sum should be paid to a thousand men at the rate of thirty shillings a week rather

than to fifty men at thirty pounds a week. In the case of the workers a greater part of the money will be spent on food. But if fifty men have thirty pounds a week each, it will be spent to satisfy the appetites of a much smaller number of people. A larger proportion will be spent on furniture, pictures, motor-cars and what not. It may be spent so as to give some kind of employment, but it will not be a division of the money so much to the interests of the farmer. However we analyse the problem it appears to be to the farmer's interests to support democratic movements in the cities, certainly up to the point where every worker in the towns has a wage which enables himself and his family to eat all they require for health. It is also to the interests of farmers to support any system of distribution of goods which eliminates the element of profit in the sale. After the farmer gets his price it is to his interests that food should be increased in cost as little as possible when the article is transferred to the consumer, because if farm produce has to bear too many profits it will be expensive for the consumer, and there will be a lessened demand. So associations like the co-operative stores, which aim at the elimination of the element of profit in distribution, should be approved of by the farmers.

Now we come to the townsman again. Is it his interest to support the farmers in his own country or to regard the world as his farm? The argument on the economic side is not so

clear, but it is, I think, just as sound. If agriculture is neglected in any country the rural population pour into the towns. The country becomes a fountain of blackleg labour. Rural labour has no traditions of trade unionism, and takes any work at any price. There are fewer people engaged in producing food, and its cost rises. Food must be imported from abroad; and there is national insecurity, as in times of war their is always the danger of the trade routes overseas being blocked by an enemy, and this again has to be provided against by heavy expenditure for militarist purposes. The farther away an army is from its base the more insecure is its position, and the same thing is true in the industrial life of nations. International trade there must always be. It is one of the means by which the larger solidarity of humanity is to be achieved; but that will never come about until there is a nobler and more human life within the states, and we must begin by perfecting national life before we consider empires and world federations. So in this essay only the national being is considered.

I desire to unite countryman and townsman in one movement, and to make the co-operative principle the basis of a national civilization. How are we to prevent them fighting the old battle between producer and consumer? I think that this can best be brought about by co-operative federations, which will act for both in manufacture, purchase, and sale, and with which both rural and urban associations will find it to their

interest to be affiliated. Now the townsman cannot to any extent supply food for his stores by buying farms. To control agricultural production in that way would necessitate a financial operation which the State would shrink from, and which it would be impossible for urban co-operators to finance. We had better make up our minds to let farmers be syndicalists, controlling entirely the processes of agricultural production themselves. They will do it better than the townsman could, more efficiently and more economically. They will never be able, with the world in competition, to put up prices artificially. How can the two main divisions of national life be brought together in a national solidarity? We can find an answer if we remember that farmers are not only producers but consumers. They do not go about naked in the fields. They require clothes, furniture, tea, coffee, sugar, oil, soap, candles, pots and pans—in fact the farmer's wife needs nearly all the things the townsman's wife needs, except that she purchases a little less food. But even here modern conditions are driving the farmer to buy food in the shops rather than to produce it for himself on the farm. Country bread is made in the bakery more and more. Butter, cheese, and bacon are made in factories, and the farmer's tendency is to buy what bread, bacon, and butter he requires, selling the milk to be made into butter to a creamery, the grain to make the bread to a miller, and the pigs to a factory. Co-operative distribution would be

as advantageous to the country as in the town. Already in Ireland a considerable number of farmers' societies are enlarging their objects, and are turning what originally were purely agricultural associations into general purposes societies, where the farmer's wife can purchase her domestic requirements as well as her man his machinery, fertilizers, feeding-stuffs, and seeds. It would be to the interest of rural societies to deal with co-operative wholesales just as much as it is in the interest of urban stores to do so. It would be to their interest to take shares in these wholesales and productive federations, and see that they cater for the farmer's interests as much as for the townsman's.

The urban co-operators, on their side, will see the opportunities for productive co-operation the union of rural and urban movements would create. They naturally will desire to employ as many people as possible in co-operative production. Farmers are surrounded by rings of all kinds: machinery manufacturers who will not sell to their societies, manure manufacturers' alliances who keep up prices. It is a great industry, this of supplying the farmer with his fertilizers, feeding-stuffs, cake, machinery. These rural co-operative societies are increasing in number year by year. Farmers want clothes, hats, and boots: and the necessary machinery for their industry is almost entirely of urban manufacture—ploughs, binders, separators, harrows, and many other implements of tillage. It

is an immense industry and yet to be co-operatively exploited. In the towns some progress has been made in distribution. But a nation depends upon its wealth producers and not upon its consumers. Co-operators might double, treble, or quadruple the distributive trade, and still occupy only a very secondary position in national life unless they enter more largely upon production. We will never make the co-operative idea the fundamental one in the civilization of Ireland until we employ a very large part of the population in production. Now we have at present, thanks to the energy of the pioneers of agricultural co-operation, a new market opening in the country for things which the townsman can produce. Does not this suggest new productive urban enterprises? Does it not favour an evolution of manufacturing industry, so that democratic control may finally replace the autocratic control of the capitalist? The trades unions cannot do this alone by following up any of their traditional policies. They cannot go into trade on their own account with any guarantee of success unless they are associated with agencies of distribution. But if co-operators—urban and rural—through their federations invade more and more the field of production they will draw to themselves the hearts and hopes of the workers and idealists in the nation. People are really more concerned about the making of an income than about the spending of it. It is a necessity of our policy if it is to bring about the co-operative commonwealth,

that co-operators must adventure much more largely into production than they have hitherto done.

Now let us see what we have come to. There is a country movement which is not merely one for agricultural production. It is rapidly taking up the distribution of goods. There is an urban movement not merely concerned with distribution but entering upon production. They can be brought into harmony if the same federations act for both branches of the movement. The meeting-place of the two armies should be there. If this policy is adopted there will gradually grow up that unity of purpose between country and urban workers which is the psychological basis and necessary precedent for national action for the common good. The policy of identity of interest must be real, and it can only be real when the identity of interest is obvious, and it can only be made obvious when the symbols of that unity and identity are visible day by day in buildings and manufactures, things which are handled and seen, and in transactions which daily bring that unity to mind. The old poetic ideal of a united Ireland was and could only be a geographical expression, and not a human reality, so long as men were individualist in economics and were competing and struggling with each other for mastery.

By the co-operative commonwealth more is meant than a series of organizations for economic purposes. We hope to create finally, by the

close texture of our organizations, that vivid sense of the identity of interest of the people in this island which is the basis of citizenship, and without which there can be no noble national life. Our great nation-states have grown so large, so myriad are their populations, so complicated are their interests, that most people in them really feel no sense of brotherhood with each other. We have yet to create inside our great nation-states social and economic organizations, which will make this identity of interest real and evident, and not seem merely a metaphor, as it does to most people to-day. The more the co-operative movement does this for its members, the more points of contact they find in it, the more will we tend to make out of it and its branches real social organisms, which will become as closely knit psychically as physically the cells in a human body are knit together. Our Irish diversities of interest have made us world-famous; but such industrial and agricultural organizations would swallow up these antagonisms, as the serpents created by the black art of the Egyptian magicians were swallowed up by the rod Aaron cast on the floor, and which was made animate by the white magic of the Lord.

XIII

It will appear to the idealist who has contemplated the heavens more closely than the earth that the policy I advocate is one which only tardily could be put into operation, and would be paltry and inadequate as a basis for society. The idealist with the Golden Age already in his heart believes he has only to erect the Golden Banner and display it for multitudes to array themselves beneath its folds; therefore he advocates not, as I do, a way to the life, but the life itself. I am sympathetic with idealists in a hurry, but I do not think the world can be changed suddenly by some heavenly alchemy, as St. Paul was smitten by a light from the overworld. Such light from heaven is vouchsafed to individuals, but never to nations, who progress by an orderly evolution in society. Though the heart in us cries out continually, "Oh, hurry, hurry to the Golden Age," though we think of revolutions, we know that the patient marshalling of human forces is wisdom. We have to devise ways and means and light every step clearly before the nation will leave its footing in some safe if unattractive locality to

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plant itself elsewhere. The individual may be reckless. The race never can be so, for it carries too great a burden and too high destinies, and it is only when the gods wish to destroy or chastise a race that they first make it mad. Not by revolutions can humanity be perfected. I might quote from an old oracle, "The gods are never so turned away from man as when he ascends to them by disorderly methods." Our spirits may live in the Golden Age, but our bodily life moves on slow feet, and needs the lantern on the path and the staff struck carefully into the darkness before us to see that the path beyond is not a morass, and the light not a will o' the wisp.

Other critics may say I would destroy the variety of civilization by the inflexible application of a single idea. Well, I realize that the net which is spread for Leviathan will not capture all the creatures of the deep; and the complexity of human nature is such that it is impossible to imagine a policy, however fitting in certain spheres of human activity, which could be applied to the whole of life. What I think we should aim at is making the co-operative idea fundamental in Irish life. But to say fundamental is not to say absolute. Always there will be enterprising persons—men of creative minds—who will break away from the mass and who will insist, perhaps rightly, on an autocratic control of the enterprises they found, which were made possible alone by their genius, and which would not succeed unless every worker in the enterprise was malleable by

their will. It is unlikely that State action will cease, or that any Government we may have will not respond to the appeal of the people to do this, that, or the other for them which they are too indolent to do for themselves, or which by the nature of things only governments can undertake. For a principle to be fundamental in a country does not mean that it must be absolute. I hope society in Ireland will be organized that the idea of democratic control of its economic life will so pervade Irish thought that it will be in the body politic what the spinal column is to the body—the pillar on which it rests, the strongest single factor in the body. Another illustration may make still clearer my meaning. In a red sunsetting the glow is so powerful that green hills, white houses, and blue waters, touched by its light, assume a ruddy colour, partly a local colour, and partly a reflected light from the sun. Now in the same way, what is most powerful in society multiplies images and shadows of itself, and produces harmonies with itself which are yet not identities. It is by a predominating idea that nations achieve the practical unity of their citizens, and national progress becomes possible. In the future structure of society I have no doubt there will be elements to which the socialist, the syndicalist, the capitalist, and the individualist will have contributed. By degrees it will be discovered what enterprises are best directed by the State, by municipalities, by groups, or by individuals. But if the idea of democratic control

is predominant, those enterprises which are otherwise directed will yet meet the prevalent mood by adopting the ideas of the treatment of the workers enforced in democratically controlled enterprises, and will in every respect, except control, make their standards equal. All the needles of being point to the centres where power is most manifested. The effects of the French revolution — a democratic upheaval — invaded men's minds everywhere. Even the autocratically ruled States, hitherto careless about the people in their underworlds, had to make advances to democracy, and give it some measure of the justice democracy threatened to deal to itself. Without demanding absolutism I do desire a predominant democratic character in our national enterprises, rather than a confused muddle or struggle of interests where nothing really emerges except the egoism of those who struggle.

It will be noticed that in all that has preceded I have referred little to action by government, though it is on governments that democracies over the world are now fixing all their hopes. They believe the State is the right agency to bring about reforms and changes in society. And I must here explain why I do not share their hopes. My distrust of the State in economic reform is based on the belief that governments in great nation-states, even representative governments, are not malleable by the general will. They are too easily dominated by the holders of economic power, are, in fact, always dominated

by aristocracies with land or by the aristocracies of wealth. It is the hand at the helm guides the ship. The larger the State is the more easily do the holders of economic power gain political power. The theory of representative government held good in practice, I think, so long as parliaments were engaged in formulating general rights, the right, for example, of the individual to think or profess any religion he pleased; his right not to be deprived of liberty or life without open trial by his fellow-citizens. So long as legislatures were affirming or maintaining these rights, which rich and poor equally desired, they were justified. But when legislatures began to intervene in economic matters, in the struggles between rich and poor, between capital and labour, it became at once apparent the holders of economic power had also political power; and that the institution which operated fairly where universal rights were considered did not operate fairly when there was a conflict between particular interests.

The jury of the nation was found to be packed. At least nine-tenths of the population in Great Britain, for example, belong to the wage-earning class. At least nine-tenths of the members of legislatures belong to the classes possessing land or capital. Now, why any member of the wage-earning class should look with hope to such assemblies I cannot understand. Their ideal is, or should be, economic freedom, together with democratic control of industries, an ideal in every

way opposed to the ideal of the majority of the members of the legislatures. The fiction that representative assemblies will work for the general good is proclaimed with enthusiasm; but the moment we examine their actions we see it is not so, and we discover the cause. Where the nation is capitalist and capitalism is the dominant economic factor, legislatures invariably act to uphold it, and legislation tends to fix the system more securely. We see in Great Britain that wage-earners are now openly regarded by the legislatures as a class who must not be allowed the same freedom in life as the wealthy. They must be registered, inspected, and controlled in a way which the wealthy would bitterly resent if the legislation referred to themselves. After economic inferiority has been enforced on them by capital, the stigma of human inferiority is attached to the wage-earners by the legislature. But I must not be led away from my theme by the bitter reflections which arise in one who lives in the Iron Age and knows it is Iron, who feels at times like the lost wanderer on trackless fields of ice, which never melt and will not until earth turns from its axis.

I wish to see society organized so that it shall be malleable to the general will. But political and economic progress are obstructed because existing political and economic organizations are almost entirely unmalleable by the general will. Public opinion does not control the press. The press, capitalistically controlled, creates public

opinion. Our legislators have grown so secure that they confess openly they have passed measures which they knew would be hateful to the majority of citizens, and which, if they had been voted on, would never have been passed. The theory of representative government has broken down. To tell the truth, the life of the nation is so complicated that it is difficult for the private citizen to have any intelligent opinion about national policies, and we can hardly blame the politician for despising the judgment of the private citizen. Government departments are still less malleable by public opinion than the legislature. For an individual to attack the policy of a Government department is almost as hopeless a proceeding as if a labourer were to take pickaxe and shovel and determine to level a mountain which obstructed his view. Yet Government departments are supposed to be under popular control. The Castle in Ireland, theoretically, was under popular control, but it was adamantine in policy. If the cant about popular control of legislation and Government departments is obviously untrue, how much more is it in regard to public services like railways, gas works, mines, the distribution of goods, manufacture, purchase and sale, which are almost entirely under private control and where public interference is bitterly resented and effectively opposed. What chance has the individual who is aggrieved against the great carrying companies? To come lower down, let us take the farmer in the fairs. What way has he of in-

fluencing the jobbers and dealers to act honestly by him—they who have formed rings to keep down the prices of cattle? Are they malleable to public opinion? The farmers who have waited all day through a fair know they are not.

When we consider the agencies through which people buy we find the same thing. The increase of multiple shops, combines, and rings makes the use of the limited power a man had to affect a dealer by transferring his custom to another merchant to dwindle yearly. Everywhere we turn we find this adamantine front presented by the legislature, the State departments, by the agencies of production, distribution, or credit, and it is the undemocratic organization of society which is responsible for nine-tenths of our social troubles. All the vested interests backed up by economic and political power conflict with the public welfare, and the general will, which intends the good of all, can act no more than a paralysed cripple can walk. We would all choose the physique of the athlete, with his swift, unfettered, easy movements, rather than the body of the cripple if we could, and we have this choice before us in Ireland.

If we concentrate our efforts mainly on voluntary action, striving to make the co-operative spirit predominant, the general will would manifest itself through organizations malleable to that will, flexible and readily adjusting themselves to the desires of the community. To effect reforms we have not first to labour at the

gigantic task of affecting national opinion and securing the majorities necessary for national action. In any district a hundred or two hundred men can at any time form co-operative societies for production, purchase, sale, or credit, and can link themselves by federation with other organizations like their own to secure greater strength and economic efficiency. By following this policy steadily we simplify our economic system, and reduce to fewer factors the forces in conflict in society. We beget the predominance of one principle, and enable that general will for good, which Rousseau theorized about, to find agencies through which it can manifest freely, so changing society from the static condition begot by conflict and obstruction to a dynamic condition where energies and desires manifest freely.

The general will, as Rousseau demonstrated, always intends the good, and if permitted to act would act in a large and noble way. The change from static to dynamic, from fixed forms to fluid forms, has been coming swiftly over the world owing to the liberation of thought, and this in spite of the obstruction of a society organized, I might almost say, with egomania as the predominant psychological factor. The ancient conception of Nature as a manifestation of spirit is incarnating anew in the minds of modern thinkers, and Nature is not conceived of as material, but as force and continual motion; and they are trying to identify human will with this arcane energy, and let the forces of Nature have freer

play in humanity. We begin to catch glimpses of civilizations as far exceeding ours as ours surpasses society in the Stone Age. In all our democratic movements, in these efforts towards the harmonious fusion of human forces, humanity is obscurely intent on mightier collective exploits than anything conceived of before. The nature of these energies manifesting in humanity I shall try to indicate later on. But to let the general will have free play ought to be the aim of those who wish to build up national organizations for whatever purpose; and to let the general will have free play we require something better than the English invention of representative government, which, as it exists at present, is simply a device to enable all kinds of compromises to be made on matters where there should be no compromise, as if right and wrong could come to an agreement honestly to let things be partly right and partly wrong. We are importing into Ireland some political machinery of this antiquated pattern. I have written the foregoing because I dread Irish people becoming slaves of this machine. I fear the importers of this machinery will desire to make it do things it can only do badly, and will set it to work with the ferocity of the new broom and will make it an obstruction, so that the real genius of the Irish people will be unable freely to manifest itself. The less we rely on this machinery at present, and the more we desire a machinery of progress, at once flexible and efficient, the better will it

be for us later on. What must be embodied in State action is the national will and the national soul, and until that giant being is manifested it is dangerous to let the pygmies set powers in motion which may enchain us for centuries to come.

XIV

It may seem I have spoken lightly of that infant whose birth I referred to with more solemnity in the opening pages of this book, and indeed I am a little dubious about that infant. The signature of the Irish mind is nowhere present in it, and I look upon it with something of the hesitating loyalty the inhabitant of a new Balkan State might feel for his imported prince, doubtful whether that sovereign will reflect the will of his new subjects or whether his policy will not constrain national character into an alien mould. The signature of the Irish mind is not apparent anywhere in this new machinery for self-government. Our politicians seem to have been unaware that they had any wisdom to learn from the more obvious failures of representative government as they knew it. So far as I have knowledge, no Irishman during the past century of effort for political freedom took the trouble to think out a form of government befitting Irish circumstance and character. We left it absolutely to those whom we declared incapable of understanding us or governing us to devise for us a system

by which we might govern ourselves. I do not criticize those who devised the new machinery of self-government, but those who did not devise it, and who discouraged the exercise of political imagination in Ireland. It is said of an artist that it was his fantasy first to paint his ideal of womanly beauty, and, when this was done, to approximate it touch by touch to the sitter, and when the sitter cried, "Ah, now it is growing like!" the artist ceased, combining the maximum of ideal beauty possible with the minimum of likeness. Now if we had thought out the ideal structure of Irish government we might have offered it for criticism by those in whose power it was to accept or reject, and have gradually approximated it until a point was reached where the compromise left at least something of our making and imagination in it. There is nothing of us in the Act which is in abeyance as I write. I am less concerned with it than with the creation of a social order, for the social order in a country is the strong and fast fortress where national character is created and preserved. A legislature may theoretically allow self-government, but by its constitution may operate against national character and its expression in a civilization. We have accepted the principle of representative government, and that, I readily concede, is the ideal principle, but the method by which a representative character is to be given to State institutions we have not thought out at all. We have committed the error our neighbours have

committed of assuming that the representative assembly which can legislate for general interests can deal equally with particular interests; that the body of men who will act unitedly so as to secure the liberty of person or liberty of thought, which all desire for themselves, will also act wisely where class problems and the development of particular industries are concerned. The whole history of representative assemblies shows that the machinery adequate for the furtherance and protection of general interests operates unjustly or stupidly in practice against particular interests. The long neglect of agriculture and the actual condition of the sweated are instances. I agree that representative government is the ideal, but how is it to operate in the legislature and still more in administration? Are government departments to be controlled by Parliament or by the representatives of the particular class to promote whose interests special departments were created. I hold that the continuous efficiency of State departments can only be maintained when they are controlled in respect of policy, not by the casual politician whom the fluctuations of popular emotion places at their head, but by the class or industry the State institution was created to serve. A department of State can conceivably be preserved from stagnation by a minister of strong will, who has a more profound knowledge of the problems connected with his department than even his permanent officials. He might vitalize them from above. But does

the party system yield us such Ministers? In practice is not high position the reward of service to party? Is special knowledge demanded of the controller of a Board of Trade or a Board of Agriculture? Do we not all know that the vast majority of Ministers are controlled by the permanent officials of their department. Failing great Ministers, the operations of a department may be vitalized by control over its policy exercised, not by a general assembly like Parliament, but by a board elected from the class or industry the department ostensibly was created to serve. An agricultural department controlled by a council or board composed solely of those making their livelihood out of agriculture and elected solely by their own class, would, we may be certain, be practical in its methods. It would receive perpetual stimulus from those engaged in making their living by the industry. Parliaments or senates should confine themselves to matters of general interest, leaving particular or special interests to those who understand them, to the specialists, and only intervene when national interests are involved by a clashing of particular interests. Our State institutions will never fulfil their functions efficiently until they are subject in respect of policy not to general control, but the control of the class they were created to serve.

That ideal can only be realized fully when all industries are organized. But we should work towards it. Parliament may act as a kind of

guardian of the unorganized, but, once an industry is organized, once it has come of age, it must resent domination by bodies without the special knowledge of which it has the monopoly within itself. It should not tolerate domination by the unexpert outsider, whatever may be his repute in other spheres. It is only when industries are organized that the democratic system of election can justify itself by results in administration. When a county, let us say, chooses a member of Parliament to represent every interest, only too often it chooses a man who can represent few interests except his own. The greatest common denominator of the constituents is as a rule some fluent utterer of platitudes. But if the farmers in a county, or the manufacturers in a county, or the workers in a county, had each to choose a man to represent them, we may be certain the farmers would choose one whom they regarded as competent to interpret their needs, the manufacturers a man of real ability, and labour would select its best intelligence. Persons engaged in special work rarely fail to recognize the best men in their own industry. Then they judge somewhat as experts, whereas they are by no means experts when they are asked to select a representative to represent everybody in every industry. To secure good government I conceive we must have two kinds of representative assemblies running concurrently with their spheres of influence well defined. One, the supreme body, should be elected by counties or cities to deal

with general interests, taxation, justice, education, the duties and rights of individual citizens as citizens. The other bodies should be elected by the people engaged in particular occupations to control the policy of the State institutions created to foster particular interests. The average man will elect people to his mind whose deliberations will be in a sphere where the ideas of the average man ought to be heard and must be respected. The specialists in their department of industry will elect experts to work in a sphere where their knowledge will be invaluable, and where, if it is not present, there will be muddle.

The machinery of government ought never to be complicated, and ought to be easily understood by the citizens. In Ireland, where we have at present no thought of foreign policy, no question of army or navy, departments of State should fall naturally into a few divisions concerned with agriculture, education, local government, justice, police, and taxation. The administration of some of these are matters of national concern, and they should and must be under parliamentary control, and that control should be jealously protected. Others are sectional, and these should be controlled in respect of policy by persons representative of these sections, and elected solely by them. I think there should also be a department of Labour. I am not sure that the main work of the Minister in charge ought not to be the organization of labour in its proper unions or guilds. It is a work as important to the State

as the organization of agriculture, and indeed from a humanitarian point of view more urgent. Nothing is more lamentable, nothing fills the heart more with despair, than the multitude of isolated workers, sweated, unable to fix a price for their work, ignorant of its true economic value; connected with no union, unable to find any body to fall back on for help or advice in trouble, neglected altogether by society, which yet has to pay a heavy price in disease, charity, poor rates, and in social disorder for its neglect. Was not the last Irish rising largely composed of those who were economically neglected and oppressed? Society bears a heavier burden for its indifference than it would bear if it accepted responsibility for the organization of labour in its own defence. The State in these islands recommends farmers to organize for the protection of their interests and assists in the organization, and leaves the organized farmers free to use their organizations as they will. As good a case could be made for the State aiding in the organization of labour for the protection of its own interests. A ministry of labour should seek out all wage-earners; where there is no trade union one should be organized, and, where one exists, all workers should be pressed to join it. Such a ministry ought to be the city of refuge for the proletarian, and the Minister be the Father of Labour, fighting its battles for an entry into humanity and its rightful place in civilization.

If we consider the problem of representation,

it should not be impossible to devise a system of which the foundation might be the County Councils, where there would be as sub-divisions, committees for local government, agriculture, and technical instruction or trade to deal with local administration in these matters. These committees should send representatives to general councils of local government, agriculture, and trade. The election should not be by the County Council as a body, but by the committees, so that traders would have no voice in choosing a representative for farmers, nor farmers interfere in the choice of manufacturers or traders selecting a representative on a general Council of Trade, and it should be regarded as ridiculous any such intervention as for a War Office to claim it should have a voice along with the Admiralty in the selection of captains and commanders of vessels of war. At these general councils, which might meet twice a year for whatever number of days may be expedient, general policies would be decided and boards elected to ensure the carrying out by the officials of the policies decided upon. By this process of selection men who had to control Boards of Agriculture, Trade, or Local Government would be three times elected, each time by a gradually decreasing electorate, with a gradually increasing special knowledge of the matters to be dealt with. A really useless person may contrive to be chosen as representative by a thousand electors. It requires an able man to convince a committee of ten persons, themselves

more or less specialists, that his is the best brain among them. Where national education, a thorny subject in Ireland, is concerned, I think the educationalists in provinces might be asked to elect representatives from their own profession on a Council of Education to act as an advisory body to the Minister of Education. County Council elections are not exactly means by which miracles of culture are discovered. A man who came to be member of a board of control would at least have proved his ability to others engaged on work like his own who have special knowledge of it and of his capacity to deal with it. If this system was accepted, we would not have traders on our Council of Agriculture protesting against the farmers organizing their industry, because none but persons concerned with agriculture would be allowed to be members of agricultural committees, and this would, of course, involve the concentration of merchants and manufacturers upon the work of a Board of Trade and the control of a policy of technical instruction suitable for industrial workers, where agricultural advisers in their turn would be out of place. Control so exercised over the policy of State institutions would vitalize them, and tend to make them enter more intimately into the department of national effort they were created to foster. The stagnation which falls on most Government departments is due to this, that the responsible heads rarely have a knowledge great enough to enable them to inaugurate new methods, that

parliamentary control is never adequate, is rarely exercised with knowledge, and there is always a party in power to defend the policy of their Minister, for if one Minister is successfully attacked a whole party goes out of power. We, in Ireland, should desire above all things efficiency in our public servants. They will stagnate in their offices unless they are continually stimulated by intimate connection with the class they work for and who have a power of control. This system would also, I believe, lead to less jobbery. Men in an assembly, where theoretically every class and interest are represented, often conspire to make bad appointments, because only a minority have knowledge of what qualifications the official ought to have, and they are outvoted by representatives who do their friends such good turns often in sheer ignorance that they are betraying their constituents. Where specialists have power, and where the well-being of their own industry is concerned, they never willingly appoint the inefficient. Such an organization of our County Council system would operate also to break up sectarian cliques. The feeling of organized classes, farmers, or industrialists, concerned about their own well-being, would oppose itself to sectarian sentiment where its application was unfitting.

In the system of representative government I have outlined, we would have one supreme or national assembly concerned with general interests, justice, taxation, education, the apportioning of

revenue to its various uses, reserving to itself direct control over the policy of the departments of treasury, police, judiciary, all that affects the citizens equally; and, beneath it, other councils, representative of classes and special interests, controlling the policy and administration of the State departments concerned with their work. Where everybody was concerned everybody would have that measure of control which a vote confers; where particular interests were concerned these interests would not be hampered in their development by the intervention of busybodies from outside. Of course on matters where particular interests clashed with general interests, or were unable to adjust themselves to other interests, the supreme Assembly would have to decide. The more sectional interests are removed from discussion in the National Assembly, and the more it confines itself to general interests the more will it approximate to the ideal senate, be less the haunt of greed, and more the vehicle of the national will and the national being.

By the application of the principle of representative government now in force, one is reminded of nothing so much as the palette of an artist who had squeezed out the primary colours and mixed them into a greasy drab tint, where the purity of every colour was lost, or the most powerful pigment was in dull domination. If the modification of the representative principle I have outlined was in operation, with each interest or industry organized, and freed from alien inter-

ference, the effect might be likened to a disc with the seven primary colours raying from a centre, and made to whirl where the motion produced rather the effect of pure light. We must not mix the colours of national life until conflicting interests muddle themselves into a grey drab of human futility, but strive, so far as possible, to keep them pure and unmixed, each retaining its own peculiar lustre, so that in their conjunction with others they will harmonize, as do the pure primary colours, and in their motion make a light of true intelligence to prevail in the national being.

XV

No policy can succeed if it be not in accord with national character. If I have misjudged that, what is written here is vain. It may be asked, can any one abstract from the chaos which is Irish history a prevailing mood or tendency recurring again and again, and assert these are fundamental? It is difficult to define national character, even in long-established States whose history lies open to the world; but it is most difficult in Ireland, which for centuries has not acted by its own will from its own centre, where national activity was mainly by way of protest against external domination, or a readjustment of itself to external power. We can no more deduce the political character of the Irish from the history of the past seven hundred years than we can estimate the quality of genius in an artist whom we have only seen when grappling with a burglar. The political character of a people emerges only when they are shaping in freedom their own civilization. To get a clue in Ireland we must slip by those seven centuries of struggle and study national origins, as the lexicographer,

to get the exact meaning of a word, traces it to its derivation. The greatest value our early history and literature has for us is the value of a clue to character, to be returned to again and again in the maze of our infinitely more complicated life and era.

In every nation which has been allowed free development, while it has the qualities common to all humanity, it will be found that some one idea was predominant, and in its predominance regrouped about itself other ideas. With our neighbours I believe the idea of personal liberty has been the inspiring motive of all that is best in its political development, whatever the reactions and oppressions may have been. In ancient Attica the idea of beauty, proportion, or harmony in life so pervaded the minds of the citizens that the surplus revenues of the State were devoted to the beautifying of the city. We find that love for beauty in its art, its literature, its architecture; and to Plato, the highest mind in the Athenian State, Deity itself appeared as Beauty in its very essence. That mighty mid-European State, whose ambitions have upset the world, seems to conceive of the State as power. Other races have had a passion for justice, and have left codes of law which have profoundly affected the life of nations which grew up long after they were dead. The cry of ancient Israel for righteousness rings out above all other passions, and its laws are essentially the laws of a people who desired that morality should prevail.

We have to discover for ourselves the ideas which lie at the root of national character, and so inculcate these principles that they will pervade the nation and make it a spiritual solidarity, and unite the best minds in their service, and so control those passionate and turbulent elements which are the cause of the downfall and wreckage of nations by internal dissensions. I desire as much as any one to preserve our national identity, and to make it worthy of preservation, and this can only be done by the domination of some inspiring ideal which will draw all hearts to it; which may at first have that element of strangeness in it which Ben Jonson said was in all excellent beauty, and which will later become—as all high things we love do finally become—familiar to us, and nearer and closer to us than the beatings of our own hearts.

When ideals which really lie at the root of our being are first proclaimed, all that is external in life protests. So were many great reformers martyred, but they left their ideals behind them in the air, and men breathed them and they became part of their very being. Nationality is a state of consciousness, a mood of definite character in our intellectual being, and it is not perceived first except in profound meditation; it does not become apparent from superficial activities any more than we could, by looking at the world and the tragic history of mankind, discover that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us. That knowledge comes to those who go

within themselves, and not to those who seek without for the way, the truth, and the life. But, once proclaimed, the incorruptible spiritual element in man intuitively recognizes it as truth, and it has a profound effect on human action. There is, I believe, a powerful Irish character which has begun to reassert itself in modern times, and this character is in essentials what it was two thousand years ago. We discover its first manifestation in the ancient clans. The clan was at once aristocratic and democratic. It was aristocratic in leadership and democratic in its economic basis. The most powerful character was elected as chief, while the land was the property of the clan. That social order indicates the true political character of the Irish. Races which last for thousands of years do not change in essentials. They change in circumstance. They may grow better or worse, but throughout their history the same fundamentals appear and reassert themselves. We can see later in Irish literature or politics, as powerful personalities emerged and expressed themselves, how the ancient character persisted. Swift, Goldsmith, Berkeley, O'Grady, Shaw, Wilde, Parnell, Davitt, Plunkett, and many others, however they differed from each other, in so far as they betrayed a political character, were intensely democratic in economic theory, adding that to an aristocratic freedom of thought. That peculiar character, I believe, still persists among our people in the mass, and it is by adopting a policy which will enable it to manifest once more

that we will create an Irish civilization, which will fit our character as the glove fits the hand. During the last quarter of a century of comparatively peaceful life the co-operative principle has once more laid hold on the imagination of the Irish townsman and the Irish countryman. The communal character is still preserved. It still wills to express itself in its external aspects in a communal civilization, in an economic brotherhood. That movement alone provides in Ireland for the aristocratic and democratic elements in Irish character. It brings into prominence the aristocracy of character and intelligence which it is really the Irish nature to love, and its economic basis is democratic. A large part of our failure to achieve anything memorable in Ireland is due to the fact that, influenced by the example of our great neighbours, we reversed the natural position of the aristocratic and democratic elements in the national being. Instead of being democratic in our economic life, with the aristocracy of character and intelligence to lead us, we became meanly individualistic in our economics and meanly democratic in leadership. That is, we allowed individualism—the devilish doctrine of every man for himself—to be the keynote of our economic life; where, above all things, the general good and not the enrichment of the individual should be considered. For our leaders we chose energetic, commonplace types, and made them represent us in the legislature; though it is in leadership above all

that we need, not the aristocracy of birth, but the aristocracy of character, intellect, and will. We had not that aristocracy to lead us. We chose instead persons whose ideas were in no respect nobler than the average to be our guides, or rather to be guided by us. Yet when the aristocratic character appeared, however imperfect, how it was adored! Ireland gave to Parnell —an aristocratic character—the love which springs from the deeps of its being, a love which it gave to none other in our time.

With our great neighbours what are our national characteristics were reversed. They are an individualistic race. This individualism has expressed itself in history and society in a thousand ways. Being individualistic in economics, they were naturally democratic in politics. They have a genius for choosing forcible average men as leaders. They mistrust genius in high places. Intensely individualistic themselves, they feared the aristocratic character in politics. They desired rather that general principles should be asserted to encircle and keep safe their own national eccentricity. They have gradually infected us with something of their ways, and as they were not truly our ways we never made a success of them. It is best for us to fall back on what is natural with us, what is innate in character, what was visible among us in the earliest times, and what, I still believe, persists among us—a respect for the aristocratic intellect, for freedom of thought, ideals, poetry, and imagination, as the

qualities to be looked for in leaders, and a bias for democracy in our economic life. We were more Irish truly in the heroic ages. We would not then have taken, as we do to-day, the huckster or the publican and make them our representative men, and allow them to corrupt the national soul. Did not the whole vulgar mob of our politicians lately unite to declare to the world that Irish nationality was impossible except it was floated on a sea of liquor? The image of Kathleen ni Houlihan anciently was beauty in the hearts of poets and dreamers. We often thought her unwise, but never did we find her ignoble; never was she without a flame of idealism in her eyes, until this ignoble crew declared alcohol to be the only possible basis of Irish nationality.

In the remote past we find the national instincts of our people fully manifested. We find in this early literature a love for the truth-teller and for the hero. Indeed they did not choose as chieftains of their clans men whom the bards could not sing. They reverenced wisdom, whether in king, bard, or ollav, and at the same time there was a communal basis for economic life. This heroic literature is, as our Standish O'Grady declared, rather prophecy than history. It reveals what the highest spirits deemed the highest, and what was said lay so close to the heart of the race that it is still remembered and read. That literature discloses the character of the national being, still to be manifested in a civilization, and it must flame out before the tale which began

among the gods is closed. Whatever brings this communal character into our social order, and at the same time desires the independent aristocratic intellect, is in accord with the national tradition. The co-operative movement is the modern expression of that mood. It is already making a conquest of the Irish mind, and in its application to life predisposing our people to respect for the man of special attainments, independent character, and intellect. A social order which has made its economics democratic in character needs such men above all things. It needs aristocratic thinkers to save the social order from stagnation, the disease which eats into all harmonious life. We shall succeed or fail in Ireland as we succeed or fail to make democracy prevail in our economic life, and aristocratic ideals to prevail in our political and intellectual life.

In all things it is best for a people to obey the law of their own being. The lion can never become the ox, and "one law for the lion and the ox is oppression." Now that the hammer of Thor is wrecking our civilizations, is destroying the body of European nationalities, the spirit is freer to reshape the world nearer to the heart's desire. Necessity will drive us along with the rest to recast our social order and to fix our ideals. Necessity and our own hearts should lead us to a brotherhood in industry. It should be horrible to us the thought of the greedy profiteer, the pursuit of wealth for oneself rather than the union of forces for the good of all and

the creation of a brotherly society. The efforts of individuals to amass for themselves great personal wealth should be regarded as ignoble by society, and as contrary to the national spirit, as it is indeed contrary to all divine teaching. Our ideal should be economic harmony and intellectual diversity. We should regard as alien to the national spirit all who would make us think in flocks, and discipline us to an unintellectual commonalty of belief. The life of the soul is a personal adventure, a quest for the way and the truth and the life. It may be we shall find the ancient ways to be the true ways, but if we are led to the truth blindfolded and without personal effort, we are like those whom the Scripture condemns for entering into Paradise, not by the straight gate, but over the wall, like thieves and robbers. If we seek it for ourselves and come to it, we shall be true initiates and masters in the guild.

No people seem to have greater natural intelligence than the Irish. No people have been so unfortunately cursed with organizations which led them to abnegate personal thought, and Ireland is an intellectual desert where people read nothing and think nothing; where not fifty in a hundred thousand could discern the quality of thought in the *Politics* of Aristotle or the *Republic* of Plato as being in any way deeper than a leading article in one of their daily papers. And we, whose external life is so mean, whose ignorance of literature is so great, are yet flattered

by the suggestion that we have treasures of spiritual and intellectual life which should not be debased by external influences, and so it comes about that good literature is a thing unpurchasable except in some half-dozen of the larger towns. Any system which would suppress the aristocratic, fearless, independent intellect should be regarded as contrary to the Irish genius and inimical to the national being.

XVI

AMONG the many ways men have sought to create a national consciousness, a fountain of pride to the individual citizen, is to build a strong body for the great soul, and it would be an error to overlook—among other modern uprisings of ancient Irish character—the revival of the military spirit and its possible development in relation to the national being. National solidarity may be brought about by pressure from without, or by the fusion of the diverse elements in a nation by a heat engendered from within. But to create national solidarity by war is to attain but a temporary and unreal unity, a gain like theirs who climb into the Kingdom not by the straight gate, but over the wall like a robber. When one nation is threatened by another, great national sacrifices will be made, and the latent solidarity of its humanity be kindled. But when the war is over, when the circumstances uniting the people for a time are past, that spirit rapidly dies, and people begin their old antagonisms because the social order, in its normal working, does not constantly promote a consciousness of identity of interest.

Almost all the great European states have fortified their national being by militarism. Everything almost in their development has been subordinated to the necessities of national defence, and hence it is only in times of war there is any real manifestation of national spirit. It is only then that the citizens of the Iron Age feel a transitory brotherhood. It is a paradoxical phenomenon, possible only in the Iron Age, that the highest instances of national sacrifice are evoked by warfare—the most barbarous of human enterprises. To make normal that spirit of unity which is now only manifested in abnormal moments in history should be our aim; and as it is the Iron Age, and material forces are more powerful than spiritual, we must consider how these fierce energies can be put in relation with the national being with least debasement of that being. If the body of the national soul is too martial in character, it will by reflex action communicate its character to the spirit, and make it harsh and domineering, and unite against it in hatred all other nations. We have seen that in Europe but yesterday. The predominance in the body of militarist practice will finally drive out from the soul those unfathomable spiritual elements which are the body's last source of power in conflict, and it will in the end defeat its own object, which is power. When nations at war call up their reserves of humanity to the last man capable of bearing arms, their leaders begin also to summon up those bodiless moods and national

sentiments which are the souls of races, and their last and most profound sources of inspiration and deathless courage. The war then becomes a conflict of civilizations and of spiritual ideals, the aspirations and memories which constitute the fundamental basis of those civilizations. Without the inspiration of great memories or of great hopes, men are incapable of great sacrifices. They are rationalists, and the preservation of the life they know grows to be a desire greater than the immortality of the spiritual life of their race. A famous Japanese general once said it was the power to hold out for the last desperate quarter of an hour which won victories, and it is there spiritual stamina reinforces physical power. It is a mood akin to the ecstasy of the martyr through his burning. Though in these mad moments neither spiritual nor material is consciously differentiated, the spiritual is there in a fiery fusion with all other forces. If it is absent, the body unsupported may take to its heels or will yield. It has played its only card, and has not eternity to fling upon the table in a last gamble for victory.

A military organization may strengthen the national being, but if it dominates it, it will impoverish its life. How little Sparta has given to the world compared with Attica. Yet when national ideals have been created they assume an immeasurably greater dignity when the citizens organize themselves for the defence of their ideals, and are prepared to yield up life itself as

a sacrifice if by this the national being may be preserved. A creed always gains respect through its martyrs. We may grant all this, yet be doubtful whether a militarist organization should be the main support of the national being in Ireland. The character of the ideal should, I believe, be otherwise created, and I am not certain that it could not be as well preserved and defended by a civil organization, such as I have indicated, as by armed power. Our geographical position and the slender population of our country also make it evident that the utmost force Ireland could organize would make but a feeble barrier against assault by any of the greater States. We have seen how Belgium, a country with a population larger than that of Ireland, was thrust aside, crushed and bleeding, by one stroke from the paw of its mighty neighbour.[1] The military and political institutions of a small country are comparatively easy to displace, but it would be a task infinitely more difficult to destroy ideals or to extinguish a national being based on a social order, democratic and co-operative in character, the soul of the country being continually fed by institutions which, by their very nature, would be almost impossible to alter unless destruction of the whole humanity of the country was aimed at. National ideals, based on a co-operative social order, would have the same power of resistance almost as a religion, which is, of all things, most

[1] Since this book was written Ireland has had a tragic illustration of the truth of what is urged in these pages.

unconquerable by physical force, and, when it is itself militant, the most powerful ally of military power. The aim of all nations is to preserve their immortality. I do not oppose the creation of a national army for this purpose. There are occasions when the manhood of a nation must be prepared to yield life rather than submit to oppression, when it must perish in self-contempt or resist by force what wrong would be imposed by force. But I would like to point out that for a country in the position of Ireland the surest means of preserving the national being by the sacrifice and devotion of the people are economic and spiritual.

Our political life in the past has been sordid and unstable because we were uncultured as a nation. National ideals have been the possession of the few in Ireland, and have not been diffused. That is the cause of our comparative failure as a nation. If we would create an Irish culture, and spread it widely among our people, we would have the same unfathomable sources of inspiration and sacrifice to draw upon in our acts as a nation as the individual has who believes he is immortal, and that his life here is but a temporary foray into time out of eternity.

Yet we have much to learn from the study of military organization. The great problem of all civilizations is the creation of citizens: that is, of people who are dominated by the ideal of the general welfare, who will sink private desire and work harmoniously with their fellow-citizens for

the highest good of their race. While we may all agree that war brings about an eruption of the arcane and elemental forces which lie normally in the pit of human life, as the forces which cause earthquakes lie normally asleep in the womb of the world, none the less we must admit that military genius has discovered and applied with mastery a law of life which is of the highest importance to civilization—far more important to civil even than to military development—and that is the means by which the individual will forget his personal danger and sacrifice life itself for the general welfare. In no other organization will men in great masses so entirely forget themselves as men will in battle under military discipline. What is the cause of this? Can we discover how it is done and apply the law to civil life?

The military discipline works miracles. The problem before the captains of armies is to take the body of man, the most naturally egoistic of all things, which hates pain and which will normally take to its legs in danger and try to save itself, and to dominate it so that the body and the soul inhabiting it will stand still and face all it loathes. And the problem is solved in the vast majority of cases. After military training the civilians who formerly would fly before a few policemen will manfully and heroically stand, not the blows of a baton, but a whole hail of bullets, a cannonade lasting through a day; nay, they will for weeks and months, day by day, risk and lose life for a cause, for an idea, at a word of

command. They may not have half as good a cause to lose life for as they had as a mob of angry civilians, but they will face death now, and the chances of mutilation and agony worse than death. Can we inspire civilians with the same passionate self-forgetfulness in the pursuit of the higher ideals of peace? Men in a regiment have to a large extent the personal interests abolished. The organization they now belong to supports them and becomes their life. By their union with it a new being is created. Exercise, drill, manœuvre, accentuate that unity, and *esprit de corps* arises, so that they feel their highest life is the corporate one; and that feeling is fostered continually, until at last all the units, by some law of the soul, are as it were in spite of themselves, in spite of the legs which want to run, in spite of the body which trembles with fear, constrained to move in obedience to the purpose of the whole organism expressed by its controlling will; and so we get these devoted masses of men who advance again and again under a hail more terrible than Dante imagined falling in his vision of the fiery world.

There is nothing like it in civilian life, but yet the aim of the higher minds in all civilizations is to create a similar devotion to civic ideals, so that men will not only, as Pericles said, "give their bodies for the commonwealth," but will devote mind, will, and imagination with equal assiduity and self-surrender to the creation of a civilization which will be the inheritance of all and a cause

of pride to every one, and which will bring to the individual a greater beauty and richness of life than he could finally reach by the utmost private efforts of which he was capable.

I believe that an organization of society, such as I have indicated, would evolve gradually a similar passion for the general zeal, having, without the stern restraint militarism imposes on its units, a like power of turning the thoughts to the general good.

I may say also that to create a militarist organization, before the natural principles to be safeguarded are well understood and a common possession of all the people in the country, would be a danger akin to the peril of allowing children to play with firearms. We may find it a bad business to create natural ideals as they are required, just as it is a perilous business to try to create an army when a country is in a state of war. If we do not rapidly create a national culture embodying the fundamental ideas we wish to see prevailing in society, our volunteer armies will be subject to influences from the baser sort of politicians who would force party aims on the country. We shall have a wretched future unless the soul of the country can dominate the physical forces in it, unless ideals of national conduct, liberty of speech and thought, of justice and brotherhood, exist to inspire and guide it, and are recognized by all and appealed to by all parties equally.

We are standing on the threshold of nation-

hood, and it is problems like these we should be setting ourselves to solve, unless we are to be an unimportant province of the world, a mere administrative area inhabited by a quite undistinguished people.

XVII

But there are other methods of devotion to the national being possible to us through collective action, and I was moved to imagine one, having once received a letter from a bloodthirsty correspondent—one of that rather numerous class whose minds are always loaded with ball cartridge, whose fingers are always on the trigger, and who are always calling on the authorities not to hesitate to shoot. He wrote to me during a railway strike, advocating military conscription in order that railway men who went out on strike could be called up by the military authorities as the French railway strikers were, and who were subject to martial law if they disobeyed. I do not think with those who believe the venerable remedy of blood-letting is the best cure for social maladies; and I would have thought no more about that stern disciplinarian, but my mind went playing about the idea of conscription, and there came to me some thoughts which I wish to put on record in the hope that our people in some future, when the social order will create public spirit and the passion for the State more plentifully than it

does to-day, may recur to the idea and apply it. Nearly every State in the world demands from youth a couple of years' service in the army. There they are trained to defend their country—even, if necessary, to slay their own countrymen. There is much that is abhorrent to the imagination in the idea of war, and I am altogether with that noble body of men who are trying, by means of arbitration treaties, to solve national differences by reason rather than by force. But we all recognize something noble in the spirit of the nation where the community agrees that every man shall give up some years of his life to the State for the preservation of the State, and may be called upon to surrender life absolutely in that service. While the manhood of a race does this on the whole with cheerfulness, there must be something of high character in the manhood of that nation. A certain gravity attaches to national decisions which are made, as it were, upon the slopes of death, because none are exempt from service, and there is no delirious mob ready to yell for a war in which it does not run the risk of having its own dirty skin perforated by bullets. In Ireland we have never had military conscription, for reasons which are well known to all, and upon which I need not enter. I am well satisfied it should be so, for it leaves open to us the possibility of a much nobler service, one which has never yet been attempted by any modern nation, and that is civil conscription.

I throw out this suggestion, which may hold

the imagination of those who have noble conceptions of what national life should be and what a nation should work for, in the hope that some time it may fructify. There is a prohibition laid on the people in this island against conscription for military purposes. Is there any reason why we should not have conscription for civil purposes? Why should not every young man in Ireland give up two years of his life in a comradeship of labour with other young men, and be employed under skilled direction in great works of public utility, in the erection of public buildings, the beautifying of our cities, reclamation of waste lands, afforestation, and other desirable objects? The principle of service for the State for military purposes is admitted in every country, even at last by the English-speaking peoples. It is easy to be seen how this principle of conscription could be applied to infinitely nobler ends—to the building up of a beautiful civilization—and might make the country adopting it in less than half a century as beautiful as ancient Attica or majestic as ancient Egypt. While other nations take part of the life of young men for instruction in war, why should not the State in Ireland, more nobly inspired, ask of its young men that they should give equally of their lives to the State, not for the destruction of life, but for the conservation of life? This service might be asked from all—high and low, well and humbly born—except from those who can plead the reasons which exempt people abroad from military service.

As things stand to-day, if the State undertakes any public work, it does it more expensively by far than it would be if undertaken by private enterprise. Every person puts up prices for the State or for municipalities. Labour, land, and materials are all charged at the highest possible rates, whereas if there was any really high conception of citizenship and of the functions of the State, the citizens would agree so that works of public utility, or those which conspired to add to national dignity, should be done at least cost to the community. Where there is no national sacrifice there is no national pride. Because there is no national pride our modern civilizations show meanly compared with the titanic architecture of the cities and majestic civilizations of the past. We know from the ruins of these proud cities that he who walked into ancient Rome, Athens, Thebes, Memphis and Babylon, walked amid grandeurs which must have exalted the spirit. To walk into Manchester, Sheffield, or Liverpool is to feel a weight upon the soul. There is no national feeling for beauty in our industrial civilizations.

Let us suppose Ireland had through industrial conscription about fifty thousand young men every year at its disposal under a national works department. What could be done? First of all it would mean that every young man in the country would have received an industrial training of some kind. The work of technical instruction could be largely carried on in connection with

this industrial army. People talk of the benefit of discipline and obedience secured by military service. This and much more could be secured by a labour conscription. Every man in the island would have got into the habit of work at a period of life when it is most necessary, and when too many young men have no serious occupation. Parents should welcome the training and discipline for their children, and certificates of character and intelligence given by the department of national works should open up prospects of rapid employment in the ordinary industrial life of the country when the period of public service was closed. For those engaged there would be a true comradeship in labour, and the phrase, "the dignity of labour," about which so much cant has been written, would have a real significance where young men were working together for the public benefit with the knowledge that any completed work would add to the health, beauty, dignity, and prosperity of the State. In return for this labour the State should feed and clothe its industrial army, educate them, and familiarize them with some branch of employment, and make them more competent after this period of service was over to engage in private enterprise. Two years of such training would dissipate all the slackness, lack of precision, and laziness which are so often apparent in young men who have never had any strict discipline in their homes, and whom parental weakness has rendered unfit for the hard business of life.

The benefit to those undergoing such a training would of itself justify civil conscription; but when we come to think of the nation—what might not be done by a State with a national labour army under its control? Public works might be undertaken at a cost greatly below that which would otherwise be incurred, and the estimates which now paralyse the State, when it considers this really needed service or that, would assume a different appearance, as it would be embracing in one enterprise technical education and the accomplishment of beneficial works. With such an army under skilled control the big cities could have playgrounds for the children of the cities; public gardens, baths, gymnasiums, recreation rooms, hospitals, and sanatoriums might be built; waste land reclaimed and afforested, and the roadsides might be planted with fruit trees. National schools, picture-galleries, public halls, libraries, and a thousand enterprises which now hang fire because at present labour for public service is the most expensive labour, all could be undertaken. If the State becomes very poor, as indeed it is certain to be, it may be forced into some such method of fulfilling its functions. Are we, with enormous burdens of debt, to hang up every useful public work because of the expense, and spend our lives in paying State debts while the body for whom we work is unable, on account of the expense, to do anything for us in return? If the State is to continue its functions we shall have to commandeer people for its service in times of

peace as is done in times of war. There is hardly an argument which could be used to defend military conscription which could not be equalled with as powerful an argument for civil conscription. I am not at all sure that if the State in Ireland decided to utilise two years of every young man's life for State purposes that we could not disband most of our expensive constabulary and make certain squads of our civil recruits responsible for the keeping of public law and order, leaving only the officers as permanent professionals, for of course there must be expert control of the conscripts. The postal service might also be carried on largely by conscripted civilians.

This may appear a fantastic programme, but I would like to see it argued out. It would create a real brotherhood in work, just as the army creates in its own way a brotherhood between men in the same regiments. The nation adopting civil conscription could clean itself up in a couple of generations, so that in respect of public services it would be incomparable. The alternative to this is to starve all public services, to make the State simply the tax-collector, to pay the interest on a huge debt, and so get it hated because it can do nothing except collect money to pay the interest on a colossal national debt. Obviously the State as an agency to bring about civilization cannot perform both services—pay interest on huge public loans, and continue an expensive service. It must find out some way in which public services can be continued, and if possible

improved, and the open way to that is civil conscription and the assertion of a claim to two or three years of the work of every citizen for civil purposes, just as it now asserts a claim on the services of citizens for the defence of the State. As national debts are more and more piled up, it has seemed to many that here must be an end to what was called social reform, that we were entering on a black era, and no dawn would show over Europe for another century. There is always a way out of troubles if people are imaginative enough and brotherly enough to conceive of it and bold enough to take action when they have found the way. The real danger for society is that it may become spiritless and hidebound and tamed, and have none of those high qualities necessary in face of peril, and the more people get accustomed to thinking of bold schemes the better. They will get over the first shock, and may be ready when the time comes to put them into action. When a country is poor like Ireland and yet is ambitious of greatness; when the aspect of its civilization is mean and when it yet aspires to beauty; when its people are living under unsanitary conditions and yet the longing is there to give health to all; when Ireland is like this, its public men and its citizens might do much worse than brood over the possibilities of industrial conscription, and of revising the character of the purposes for which nations have hitherto claimed service from their young citizens on behalf of the State. Debarred by a fate not

altogether unkind from training every citizen in the arts of war Ireland might—if the love of country and the desire for service are really so strong as we are told—suddenly become eminent among the nations of the world by adopting a policy which in half a century would make our mean cities and our backward countryside the most beautiful in the modern world.

XVIII

I HAVE not in all this written anything about the relations of Ireland with other countries, or even with our neighbours, in whose political household we have lived for so many centuries in intimate hostility. I have considered this indeed, but did not wish, nor do I now wish, in anything I may write, to say one word which would add to that old hostility. Race hatred is the cheapest and basest of all national passions, and it is the nature of hatred, as it is the nature of love, to change us into the likeness of that which we contemplate. We grow nobly like what we adore, and ignobly like what we hate; and no people in Ireland became so anglicized in intellect and temperament, and even in the manner of expression, as those who hated our neighbours most. All hatreds long persisted in bring us to every baseness for which we hated others. The only laws which we cannot break with impunity are divine laws, and no law is more eternally sure in its workings than that which condemns us to be even as that we condemned. Hate is the high commander of so many armies that an inquiry

into the origin of this passion is at least as needful as histories of other contemporary notorieties. Not emperors or parliaments alone raise armies, but this passion also. It will sustain nations in defeat. When everything seems lost this wild captain will appear and the scattered forces are reunited. They will be as oblivious of danger as if they were divinely inspired, but if they win their battle it is to become like the conquered foe. All great wars in history, all conquests, all national antagonisms, result in an exchange of characteristics. It is because I wish Ireland to be itself, to act from its own will and its own centre, that I deprecate hatred as a force in national life. It is always possible to win a cause without the aid of this base helper, who betrays us ever in the hour of victory.

When a man finds the feeling of hate for another rising vehemently in himself, he should take it as a warning that conscience is battling in his own being with that very thing he loathes. Nations hate other nations for the evil which is in themselves; but they are as little given to self-analysis as individuals, and while they are right to overcome evil, they should first try to understand the genesis of the passion in their own nature. If we understand this, many of the ironies of history will be intelligible. We will understand why it was that our countrymen in Ulster and our countrymen in the rest of Ireland, who have denounced each other so vehemently, should at last appear to have exchanged charac-

teristics: why in the North, having passionately protested against physical force movements, no-rent manifestos, and contempt for Imperial Parliament, they should have come themselves at last to organize a physical force movement, should threaten to pay no taxes, and should refuse obedience to an Act of Parliament. We will understand also why it was their opponents came themselves to address to Ulster all the arguments and denunciations Ulster had addressed to them. I do not point this out with intent to annoy, but to illustrate by late history a law in national as well as human psychology. If this unpopular psychology I have explained was adopted everywhere as true, we would never hear expressions of hate. People would realize they were first revealing and then stabbing their own characters before the world.

Nations act towards other nations as their own citizens act towards each other. When slavery existed in a State, if that nation attacked another it was with intent to enslave. Where there is a fierce economic competition between citizen and citizen then in war with another nation, the object of the war is to destroy the trade of the enemy. If the citizens in any country could develop harmonious life among themselves they would manifest the friendliest feelings towards the people of other countries. We find that it is just among groups of people who aim at harmonious life, co-operators and socialists, that the strongest national impulses to international

brotherhood arise; and wars of domination are brought about by the will of those who within a State are dominant over the fortunes of the rest. Ireland, a small country, can only maintain its national identity by moral and economic forces. Physically it must be overmastered by most other European nations. Moral forces are really more powerful than physical forces. One Christ changed the spiritual life of Europe; one Buddha affected more myriads in Asia.

The co-operative ideal of brotherhood in industry has helped to make stronger the ideal of the brotherhood of humanity, and no body of men in any of the countries in the great War of our time regarded it with more genuine sorrow than those who were already beginning to promote schemes for international co-operation. It must be mainly in movements inspired with the ideal of the brotherhood of man, that the spirit will be generated which, in the future, shall make the idea of war so detestable that statesmen will find it is impossible to think of that solution of their disputes as they would think now of resorting to private assassination of political opponents. The great tragedy of Europe was brought about, not by the German Emperor, nor by Sir Edward Grey, nor by the Czar, nor by any of the other chiefs ostensibly controlling foreign policy, but by the nations themselves. These men may have been agents, but their action would have been impossible if they did not realize that there was a vast body of national feeling behind them not

opposed to war. Their citizens were in conflict with each other already, generating the moods which lead on to war. Emperors, foreign secretaries, ambassadors, cabinet ministers are not really powerful to move nations against their will. On the whole, they act with the will of the nations, which they understand. Let any one ruler try, for example, to change by edict the religion of his subjects, and a week would see him bereft of place and power. They could not do this, because the will of the nation would be against it. They resort to war and prepare for it because the will of the nation is with them, and this throws us back on the private citizens, who finally are individually and collectively responsible for the actions of the State. In the everlasting battle between good and evil, private soldiers are called upon to fight as well as the captains, and it is only through the intensive cultivation by individuals and races of the higher moral and intellectual qualities, until in intensity they outweigh the mood and passion of the rest, that war will finally become obsolete as the court of appeal. When there is a panic of fire in a crowded building men are suddenly tested as to character. Some will become frenzied madmen, fighting and trampling their way out. Others will act nobly, forgetting themselves. They have no time to think. What they are in their total make up as human beings, overbalanced either for good or evil, appears in an instant. Even so, some time in the heroic future, some nation in a

crisis will be weighed and will act nobly rather than passionately, and will be prepared to risk national extinction rather than continue existence at the price of killing myriads of other human beings, and it will oppose moral and spiritual forces to material forces, and it will overcome the world by making gentleness its might, as all great spiritual teachers have done. It comes to this, we cannot overcome hatred by hatred or war by war, but by the opposites of these. Evil is not overcome by evil but by good; and any race like the Irish, eager for national life, ought to learn this truth—that humanity will act towards their race as their race acts towards humanity. The noble and the base alike beget their kin. Empires, ere they disappear, see their own mirrored majesty arise in the looking-glass of time. Opposed to the pride and pomp of Egypt were the pride and pomp of Chaldaea. Echoing the beauty of the Greek city state were many lovely cities made in their image. Carthage evoked Rome. The British Empire, by the natural balance and opposition of things, called into being another empire with a civilization of coal and steel, and with ambitions for colonies and for naval power, and with that image of itself it must wrestle for empire. The great armadas that throng the seas, the armed millions upon the earth betray the fear in the minds of races, nay, the inner spiritual certitude the soul has, that pride and lust of power must yet be humbled by their kind. They must at last meet their equals

face to face, called to them as steel to magnet by some inner affinity. This is a law of life both for individuals and races, and, when this is realized, we know nothing will put an end to race conflicts except the equally determined and heroic development of the spiritual, moral, and intellectual forces which disdain to use the force and fury of material powers.

We may be assured that the divine law is not mocked, and it cannot be deceived. As men sow so do they reap. The anger we create will rend us; the love we give will return to us. Biologically, everything breeds true to its type: moods and thoughts just as much as birds and beasts and fishes. When I hear people raging against England or Germany or Russia I know that rage will beget rage, and go on begetting it, and so the whole devilish generation of passions will be continued. There are no nations to whom the entire and loyal allegiance of man's spirit could be given. It can only go out to the ideal empires and nationalities in the womb of time, for whose coming we pray. Those countries of the future we must carve out of the humanity of to-day, and we can begin building them up within our present empires and nationalities just as we are building up the co-operative movement in a social order antagonistic to it. The people who are trying to create these new ideals in the world are outposts, sentinels, and frontiersmen thrown out before the armies of the intellectual and spiritual races yet to come into being.

We can all enlist in these armies and be comrades to the pioneers. I hope many will enlist in Ireland. I would cry to our idealists to come out of this present-day Irish Babylon, so filled with sectarian, political, and race hatreds, and to work for the future. I believe profoundly, with the most extreme of Nationalists, in the future of Ireland, and in the vision of light seen by Bridget which she saw and confessed between hopes and tears to Patrick, and that this is the Isle of Destiny and the destiny will be glorious and not ignoble, and when our hour is come we will have something to give to the world, and we will be proud to give rather than to grasp. Throughout their history Irishmen have always wrought better for others than for themselves, and when they unite in Ireland to work for each other, they will direct into the right channel all that national capacity for devotion to causes for which they are famed. We ought not only to desire to be at peace with each other, but with the whole world, and this can only be brought about by the individual citizen at all times protesting against sectarian and national passions, and taking no part in them, coming out of such angry parties altogether, as the people of the Lord were called by the divine voice to come out of Babylon. It may seem a long way to set things right, but it is the swift way and the royal road, and there is no other; and nobody, no prophet crying before his time, will be listened to until the people are ready for him. The congre-

gation must gather before the preacher can deliver what is in him to say. The economic brotherhood which I have put forward as an Irish ideal would, in its realization, make us at peace with ourselves, and if we are at peace with ourselves we will be at peace with our neighbours and all other nations, and will wish them the good-will we have among ourselves, and will receive from them the same good-will. I do not believe in legal and formal solutions of national antagonisms. While we generate animosities among ourselves we will always display them to other nations, and I prefer to search out how it is national hatreds are begotten, and to show how that cancer can be cut out of the body politic.

XIX

It seems inevitable that the domination of the individual by the State must become ever greater. It is in the evolutionary process. The amalgamation of individuals into nationalities and empires is as much in the cosmic plan as the development of highly organized beings out of unicellular organisms. I believe this process will continue until humanity itself is so psychically knit together that, as a being, it will manifest some form of cosmic consciousness in which the individual will share. Our spiritual intuitions and the great religions of the world alike indicate some such goal as that to which this turbulent cavalcade of humanity is wending. A knowledge of this must be in our subconscious being, or we would find the sacrifices men make for the State otherwise inexplicable. The State, though now ostensibly secular, makes more imperious claims on man than the ancient gods did. It lays hold of life. It asserts its right to take father, brother, and son, and to send them to meet death in its own defence. It denies them a choice or judgment as to whether its action is right or wrong.

Right or wrong, the individual must be prepared to give his body for the commonwealth, and when one gives the body unresistingly, one gives the soul also. The marvellous thing about the authority of the State is that it is recognized by the vast majority of citizens. During eras of peace the citizen may be always in conflict with the policy of the State. He may call it a tyranny, but yet when it is in peril he will die to preserve for it an immortal life. The hold the State establishes over the spirit of man is the more wonderful when we look rearward on history, and see with what labour and sacrifice the State was established. But we see also how readily, once the union has been brought about, men will die to preserve it, even although it is a tyranny, a bad State. For what do they die unless the spirit in man has some inner certitude that the divine event to which humanity tends is a unity of its multitudinous life, and that a State—even a bad State—must be preserved by its citizens, because it is at least an attempt at organic unity? It is a simulacrum of the ideal; it contains the germ or possibility of that to which the spirit of man is travelling. It disciplines the individual in service to that greater being in which it will find its fulfilment, and a bad State is better than no State at all. To be without a State is to prowl backwards from the divinity before us to the beast behind us.

The power the State exerts is a spiritual power, acting on or through the will of man. The

volunteer armies do not really march to die with more readiness than the conscript armies. The sacrifice is not readily explicable by material causes. There is no material reason why the proletarian—who has no property to defend, who is more or less sure as a skilled craftsman of employment under any ruler—should concern himself whether his ruler be King, Kaiser, or President. But not one in a hundred proletarians really thinks like that. It is not the hope of personal profit works upon men to risk life. Let some exploiter of industry desire to employ a thousand men at dangerous work, with the risks of death or disablement equal to those of war; let it be known that one in six will be killed and another be disabled, and what sum will purchase the service of workers? They will risk life for the State, though given a bare subsistence or a pay which they would describe as inhuman if offered by one of the autocrats of industry. Men working for the State will make the most extraordinary sacrifices; but they stand stubbornly and sullenly as disturbers and blockers of all industry which is run for private profit. Is it not clear of the two policies for the State to adopt, to promote personal interests among its citizens or to unite men for the general good, that the first path is full of danger to the State, while through the other men will march cheerfully, though it be to death, in defence of the State. Something, a real life above the individual, acts through the national being, and would almost suggest to us

that Heaven cannot fully manifest its will to humanity through the individual, but must utter itself through multitudes. There must be an orchestration of humanity ere it can echo divine melodies. In real truth we are all seeking in the majesties we create for union with a greater Majesty.

I wrote in an earlier page that the ancient conception of Nature as a manifestation of spirit was incarnating anew in the minds of modern thinkers; that Nature was no longer conceived of as material or static in condition, but as force and continual motion; that they were trying to identify human will with this arcane energy, and let the forces of Nature manifest with more power in society. The real nature of these energies manifesting in humanity I do not know, but they have been hinted at in the Scriptures, the oracles of the Oversoul, which speak of the whole creation labouring upwards and the entry of humanity into the Divine Mind, and of the re-introcession of That Itself with all Its myriad unity into Deity, so that God might be all in all. I believe profoundly that men do not hold the ideas of liberty or solidarity, which have moved them so powerfully, merely as phantasies which are pleasant to the soul or make ease for the body; but because, whether they struggle passionately for liberty or to achieve a solidarity, in working for these two ideals, which seem in conflict, they are divinely supported, in unison with the divine nature, and energies as real as those the scientist

studies—as electricity, as magnetism, heat or light—do descend into the soul and reinforce it with elemental energy. We are here for the purposes of soul, and there can be no purpose in individualizing the soul if essential freedom is denied to it and there is only a destiny. Wherever essential freedom, the right of the spirit to choose its own heroes and its own ideals, is denied, nations rise in rebellion. But the spirit in man is wrought in a likeness to Deity, which is that harmony and unity of Being which upholds the universe; and by the very nature of the spirit, while it asserts its freedom, its impulses lead it to a harmony with all life, to a solidarity or brotherhood with it.

All these ideals of freedom, of brotherhood, of power, of justice, of beauty, which have been at one time or another the fundamental idea in civilizations, are heaven-born, and descended from the divine world, incarnating first in the highest minds in each race, perceived by them and transmitted to their fellow-citizens; and it is the emergence or manifestation of one or other of these ideals in a group which is the beginning of a nation; and the more strongly the ideal is held the more powerful becomes the national being, because the synchronous vibration of many minds in harmony brings about almost unconsciously a psychic unity, a coalescing of the subconscious being of many. It is that inner unity which constitutes the national being.

The idea of the national being emerged at

no recognizable point in our history in Ireland. It is older than any name we know. It is not earth-born, but the synthesis of many heroic and beautiful moments, and these, it must be remembered, are divine in their origin. Every heroic deed is an act of the spirit, and every perception of beauty is vision with the divine eye, and not with the mortal sense. The spirit was subtly intermingled with the shining of old romance, and it is no mere phantasy which shows Ireland at its dawn in a misty light thronged with divine figures, and beneath and nearer to us demi-gods and heroes fading into recognizable men. The bards took cognisance only of the most notable personalities who preceded them, and of these only the acts which had a symbolic or spiritual significance; and these grew thrice refined as generations of poets in enraptured musings along by the mountains or in the woods brooded upon their heritage of story, until, as it passed from age to age, the accumulated beauty grew greater than the beauty of the hour. The dream began to enter into the children of our race, and turn their thoughts from earth to that world in which it had its inception.

It was a common belief among the ancient peoples that each had a national genius or deity who presided over them, in whose all-embracing mind they were contained, and who was the shepherd of their destinies. We can conceive of the national spirit in Ireland as first manifesting itself through individual heroes or kings, and

as the history of famous warriors laid hold of the people, extending its influence until it created therein the germs of a kindred nature.

An aristocracy of lordly and chivalrous heroes is bound in time to create a great democracy by the reflection of their character in the mass, and the idea of the divine right of kings is succeeded by the idea of the divine right of the people. If this sequence cannot be traced in any one respect with historical regularity, it is because of the complexity of national life, its varied needs, the vicissitudes of history, and its infinite changes of sentiment. But the threads are all taken up in the end; and ideals which were forgotten and absent from the voices of men will be found, when recurred to, to have grown to a rarer and more spiritual beauty in their quiet abode in the heart. The seeds which were sown at the beginning of a race bear their flowers and fruits towards its close, and already antique names begin to stir us again with their power, and the antique ideals to reincarnate in us and renew their dominion over us.

They may not be recognized at first as a re-emergence of ancient moods. The democratic economics of the ancient clans have vanished almost out of memory, but the mood in which they were established reappears in those who would create a communal or co-operative life in the nation into which those ancient clans long since have melted. The instinct in the clans to waive aside the weak and to seek for an aristocratic

and powerful character in their leaders reappears in the rising generation, who turn from the utterer of platitudes to men of real intellect and strong will. The object of democratic organization is to bring out the aristocratic character in leadership, the vivid original personalities who act and think from their own will and their own centres, who bring down fire from the heaven of their spirits and quicken and vivify the mass, and make democracies also to be great and fearless and free. A nation is dead where men acknowledge only conventions. We must find out truth for ourselves, becoming first initiates and finally masters in the guild of life. The intellect of Ireland is in chains where it ought to be free, and we have individualism in our economics which ought to be co-ordinated and sternly disciplined out of the iniquity of free profiteering. To quicken the intellect and imagination of Ireland, to co-ordinate our economic life for the general good, should be the objects of national policy, and will subserve the evolutionary purpose. The free imagination and the aspiring mind alone climb into the higher spheres and deflect for us the ethereal currents. It is the multitude of aristocratic thinkers who give glory to a people and make them of service to other nations, and it is by the character of the social order and the quality of brotherhood in it our civilization will endure. Without love we are nothing.

XX

I BESEECH audience from the churches for these thoughts on our Irish polity, and would recall to them their early history, how when the fiery spirit of their Lord first manifested on earth, life, near to It, reflected It as in a glowing glass, and impulses of true living arose. Material possessions were held in common. There was no fierce talk of Thine and Mine. His ancient law counselled poverty to the spirit, lest the gates of Paradise should grow narrow before it like the eye of a needle. I believe the fading hold the heavens have over the world is due to the neglect of the economic basis of spiritual life. What profound spiritual life can there be when the social order almost forces men to battle with each other for the means of existence? I know well that no political mechanics, nothing which is an economic device only, will of themselves be able to affect the transfiguration of society and bring it under the dominion of the spirit. For that, a far higher quality of thought and action than is here indicated is necessary. The economist can provide the daily bread, but that bread of

the coming day which Christ wished his followers to aspire to must come otherwise. That should be the labour of the poets, artists, musicians, and of the heroic and aristocratic characters who provide by their life an image to which life can be modelled. Therefore I beseech audience not only of the churches, but of the poets, writers, and thinkers of Ireland for their aid in this labour. They alone can create in wide commonalty the ideals which can dominate society. It is the work of the artist to create for us images of desirable life, to manifest to us the ideal humanity, and to prefigure that vaster entity which I have called the national being. I said in an earlier page that part of the failure of Ireland must be laid to the poets who had dropped out of the divine procession and sang a solitary song; to the writers who had turned from contemplating the great to the portrayal of the little in human nature. I know how difficult it is to constrain the spirit, and how futile it is to ask artists or poets to create what they are not inspired to create. But we can ask all men—artists, poets, litterateurs, and scientists —to be citizens, and if they realize imaginatively the spiritual conception of the State, we may assume that this imaginative realization of the State will influence the labours of the mind, and what is done will, consciously or unconsciously, have reference to that collective being which must dominate society more and more, which will dominate it as a tyranny if we fail in our labours, or liberate and make more majestical the spirit

of man if we imagine rightly. All greatness is brought about by a conspiracy of the imagination and the will. Our literature certainly manifests beauty, but not greatness or majesty, for majesty only arises where there is an orchestration of humanity by some mighty conductor; and as a people we shall never manifest the highest qualities in literature or life until we are under the dominion of one, at least, of the great fundamental ideas which have been the inspiration of races. Our feebleness arises from our economic individualism. We continually neutralize each other's efforts. Yet there is no less power in humanity to-day than there ever was. We see now clearly what untamed elemental fires lay underneath the seeming placidity of the world. There was a feeling in society that, just as the earth itself had settled down to be a habitable globe, and was forgetting its ancient ferocities of earthquake that opened up gulfs between land and land and rended sea from sea, so, too, humanity was losing those wilder energies we surmised in the cave-dweller or the hunters of mastodon, mammoth, and cave-tiger. But it was all a dream—a dream, we suspect, about the earth as well as about humanity. While we indulged in these pleasing speculations on society, the scientists of our generation were placing beyond question or argument the doctrine of the indestructibility of energy and matter; and we may be sure that while there is immortal life there must be immortal energies as its companions through time, and they will never be less

powerful than they are to-day or were in the morning of the world. There will be no weakening of that mighty God-begotten brotherhood of elemental powers; and, while we cannot hope that by the wastage of time these powers will be feebler, we may hope that by an understanding of them we may get mastery over them. The wild elephant of the woods, with a greater strength than man's, has yet been trained to be his servant, and that arcane power we call electricity, which, if it shoots out of its channel, shrivels up the body of man, is now our servant. So we may hope, too, that the elemental energies in humanity itself, which break out in wars and Armageddons, will come under control. We should not hope that man will ever be a less powerful being. To hope that would be to wish for his degradation. We should wish him to become ever more and more powerful by understanding himself, and by the unity of the spiritual faculties and the elemental energies in him into one harmonious whole. At present he is feeble because he is, to use the scriptural illustration, a house divided against itself.

Our feebleness is due to the conflict of powers in us and our conflict with each other. Get the two mightiest bulls in a herd, put them opposing each other in a narrow passage, and they, being of equal strength, will reduce each other to feebleness. Neither will make headway. Let them unite together in their charge, and what will oppose them? Men at conflict in their own

hearts, opposing each other in the world, reduce themselves and each other to wretchedness. The race which could eliminate the factors which promote internal conflict in society and could organize human energies in harmony, would be powerful beyond our wildest dreams. Every now and then in world-history we come across instances of what organized humanity could accomplish. There are fragments of an architecture so majestic that they awe us as the high rocks of nature do, and they seem almost like portions of nature itself, and truly they are so, being portions of nature remade by man, who is also a nature energy of divine origin. Europe by its conflicts to-day is reducing itself to barbarism and powerlessness, and these conflicts arose out of the internal conflicts in society, for individuals and nations act outside themselves as they act inside themselves. The problem for Europe is to create a harmonious life, and it is the problem for us in Ireland, and we will have to work this out for ourselves. The creation of a harmonious life among a people must come from within. It can never come by the imposition of an external law imposed by another people. Never did master and slave work in true unison, no matter how benevolent the master or how yielding the slave, for there is in every man, no matter what his condition, a spark of divine life, and it will always be ready to stir him out of subjection, as the fires of earthquake lie below the cultivated plain. Man is a creature who has free will, and it

is by self-devised and self-checked efforts he will attain his full human stature. So the problem of creating an organic life in Ireland, a harmony of our people, a union of their efforts for the common good and for the manifestation of whatever beauty, majesty, and spirituality is in us, must be one we ourselves must solve for ourselves.

To be indifferent to the possibilities of human life, to ignore the problem, is to turn our back on heaven, which fashioned the spirit of man in its image. If the spirit of man has likeness to Deity, it means that if it manifests itself fully in the world, the world too becomes a shadowy likeness of the heavens, and our civilizations will make a harmony with the diviner spheres. We give still a service of lip belief to the Scriptures, yet active faith we have not. But they are true, yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and we have still the root of the matter in us, for when any one utters out of profound conviction his faith, there are always multitudes ready to respond. What really prevents an organic unity in Ireland is the economic individualism of our lives. The science of economics deals with the efforts of men to mine out of nature the food, minerals, and materials necessary to preserve life. There is nothing more certain than that where men work alone or only with the aid of their families they are little higher than the animals. When they tend to unite civilization begins. Then arise the towers, the temples, the cities, the achievements of the

architect and engineer. The earth is tapped of its arcane energies, the very air yields to us its mysterious powers. We control the etheric waves and send the message of our deeds across the ocean. Yet in the midst of these vast external manifestations of power, multitudes of men and women live in squalor, isolated in their labours, living in the slums of cities; and this, if we examine it, comes about because the organization of human energies into a harmonious unity is not complete. There is really no lack of food, clothing, building material, land. Nature has provided bountifully for more myriads than we are likely to see peopling the earth. But people compete with each other and undersell each other, and those who labour are mulcted of their due, and instead of turning to the earth—the inexhaustible mother—and working unitedly for the common weal, they continue that fierce competition and stultify each other's efforts and reduce each other to wretchedness. Humanity is a house divided against itself.

Those who feel this to be true must gather round any movement which gives a hope for the future, which indicates a policy by which the organic unity of society in Ireland might be attained, and our people work harmoniously to make beauty and health prevail in our civilization. What each gives up to society in the making of a civilization he gets back a thousandfold. Now, the co-operative movement alone of all movements in Ireland has aspired to make an economic

solidarity in Ireland. Whatever the aims of other movements may be—and many of them have high ideals and are necessary for the spiritual and intellectual development of our people—there is none of them which has for aim the unity of economic life. They all leave untouched this problem—how are we to organize society so that people will not be in conflict with each other, will not nullify each other's efforts, but all will conspire together for unity, so that none shall be forgotten or oppressed or left out of our brotherhood? The policy I put forward is incomplete and imperfect, and it must necessarily be so, being mainly the work of one mind, and to complete it and perfect it there must be many minds and many workers fired by the ideal. But I have indicated in some completeness how the rural population could be co-operatively organized, federated together, and how the urban population could be organized and brought into a harmony of economic purpose with the folk of the country. Within the limits of object these suggestions amount to a policy for the nation.

If the tragic condition of the world leaves us unstirred, if we draw no lessons from it, if there is no fiery stirring of will in Ireland to make it a better place to live in, then indeed we may lose hope for our country. Let us remember the most scornful condemnation in Scripture was not given to the evil but to the indifferent: "Because thou art neither hot nor cold I will spew thee out of my mouth." Let us not be the Laodiceans

of Europe, listless and indifferent to human needs, swallowing our whisky and our porter, stupefying our souls, while our poor are sweated; letting the children of our cities die with more carelessness about life than the people of any other European country, with sectarian organizations crawling in secrecy like poisonous serpents through the undergrowth of swamps and forests. The co-operative movement is at least open and ideal in its aims and objects. It is national and not sectional. It seeks the triumph of no section but the unity of our people, where unity alone is possible. Our intransigeants and extremists of all parties are not hurt or wounded by their adhesion to the co-operative ideal. We may make up our minds that the stubborn Irish temperament will never be overcome, but it may be won, and the movement which invites all parties and creeds into its ranks and gives them the largest opportunities of working together and understanding each other, gives also the largest hope of the gradual melting of old bitterness into a common tolerance where what is best essentially wins; for all true triumphs are triumphs not of force, but the conquest by a superior beauty of what is less beautiful. We should aim at a society where people will be at harmony in their economic life, will readily listen to different opinions from their own, will not turn sour faces on those who do not think as they do, but will, by reason and sympathy, comprehend each other and come at last, through sympathy and affection,

to a balancing of their diversities, as in that multitudinous diversity, which is the universe, powers and dominions and elements are balanced, and are guided harmoniously by the Shepherd of the Ages.

THE END

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form 419